INTÉGRAL

Contents

Volume 39, 2026

Editors' Note

i

Articles

Gui Hwan Lee and Joon Park
Music as Solution for "Hard" Game Design: A Cross-disciplinary Study of Boss-Battle Music in *Bloodborne*, *Dark Souls III*, *Sekiro*, and *Elden Ring* 1

Nancy Murphy
Freewheeling Strophic Form 24

Ram Reuven
Once upon a Time: One-Time Occurrences as Structural and Formal Markers 48

Jeffrey Scott Yunek
Sergei Taneev's Place in the Russian Functional Harmony Tradition 68

Analytical Vignette

John Y. Lawrence
Three Forms of "Tristesse" 85

Conference Report

Stephen Tian-You Ai and Christina Misaki Nikitin
Conference Report: *Harvard University Graduate Music Forum Conference: "TRANS∗Media"* 104

Reviews

Aldwyn Hogg Jr.
Review of *Atomic Tunes: The Cold War in American and British Popular Music* by Joanna and Tim Smolko, Indiana University Press, 2021 110

Bryan J. Parkhurst
Historical Materialism: Normative and Applied. Reviewed works: Stephan Hammel, *Toward a Materialist Conception of Music History*, Haymarket Books, 2024, and Brian Kane, *Hearing Double: Jazz, Ontology, Auditory Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2024 115

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. i–ii

Editors' Note

The editors of *Intégral* are excited to present our latest volume! Its four articles, one analytical vignette, one conference report, and two reviews showcase the variety of musical study that can gather under the banner of music theory. The repertoire investigated ranges from J. S. Bach's Inventions to popular-song adaptations of a Frédéric Chopin melody; from folk revival songs to video game music. And this volume's authors explore various relationships with this music: navigating flow states and interactive storytelling, drawing intertextual connections, cognizing unique moments, and listening through historical theoretical models.

Two of this volume's entries explore lyric-driven manipulations of song forms. In "Freewheeling Strophic Form," **Nancy Murphy** introduces a song form that features verses with a variable number of repeated melodic lines. Murphy argues that the irregularity of this form animates modes of musical storytelling, intensifying political narratives and, in her final analysis, reflecting the flight of Buffy Sainte-Marie's "little bird." Her article is part hermeneutic, drawing meaning out of the form's use in 1960s singer-songwriter music, and part historical, locating this form's precedents in cumulative and enumerative folk music.

John Y. Lawrence considers the role of lyrics in determining formal structure. In an analytical vignette titled "Three Forms of 'Tristesse,'" Lawrence analyzes two popular-song adaptations of Chopin's Étude, op. 10, no. 3, one in French and the other in English. This Étude's ambiguous and asymmetrical form is clarified in divergent ways by contrasting rhyme schemes, which suggest their own patterns of segmentation and association.

Gui Hwan Lee and Joon Park explore the role of music in the boss battles of FromSoftware's famously challenging video games in "Music as Solution for 'Hard' Game Design: A Cross-disciplinary Study of Boss-Battle Music in *Bloodborne*, *Dark Souls III*, *Sekiro*, and *Elden Ring*." They argue that this music invites players to enter into a flow state, a state that may otherwise seem challenging to reach in the context of such difficult gameplay. Lee and Park attend to narrative and formal correspondences between boss battles and their scores, drawing on product design scholarship to make connections between these correspondences and player immersion.

In "Once upon a Time: One-Time Occurrences as Structural and Formal Markers," **Ram Reuven** introduces a powerfully flexible analytical category: the one-time occurrence. Reuven identifies a variety of such occurrences—strings of rare harmonies, changes in contour, and even silences—and observes that they frequently punctuate important structural moments in tonal repertoire, ranging from Baroque fugues to late Romantic operas.

Jeffrey Scott Yunek proposes an adjustment to the common understanding of historical Russian music theory in "Sergei Taneev's Place in the Russian Functional Harmony Tradition." In this article, Yunek argues that Taneev, although best known for his counterpoint pedagogy, played a significant role in the dissemination of functional harmonic theory in Russia. To support this argument, Yunek references Taneev's diaries and other rarely cited Russian-language sources, and he uncovers traces of Hugo Riemann's functionalism in Taneev's unpublished harmonic theories.

In a report on the 2025 Harvard Graduate Music Forum Conference, **Stephen Tian-You Ai and Christina Misaki Nikitin**, two of the conference's co-organizers, provide insight into the guiding questions behind the conference's theme, "TRANS∗Media." Ai and Nikitin frame their discussion around the tension between "trans-as-method" and "trans-as-identity," providing a compelling account of the papers presented and the emergent themes. Through this framing, they also highlight the importance of the conference as an affective space that included many queer and trans attendees.

We are also pleased to present two reviews of recent books: **Aldwyn Hogg Jr.'s** review of *Atomic Tunes: The Cold*

War in American and British Popular Music by Joanna and Tim Smolko (2021), as well as **Bryan J. Parkhurst's** "Historical Materialism: Normative and Applied," a double review of *Toward a Materialist Conception of Music History* by Stephan Hammel (2024) and *Hearing Double: Jazz, Ontology, Auditory Culture* by Brian Kane (2024).

As ever, we express our deep appreciation to Intégral's staff, editorial board, and typesetters for their diligent service, to the many scholars who provided thorough and insightful reviews, and to you for your readership and support.

Kaylee Bernard
Maeve Gillen
Ryan Jones
Co-Editors

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 1–23

Music as Solution for "Hard" Game Design: A Cross-disciplinary Study of Boss-Battle Music in *Bloodborne*, *Dark Souls III*, *Sekiro*, and *Elden Ring*

by Gui Hwan Lee and Joon Park

Abstract. FromSoftware's action role-playing games (F-ARPGs), including *Bloodborne*, *Dark Souls III*, *Sekiro*, and *Elden Ring*, are infamous for their difficulty yet consistently gain popularity and support among gaming communities. We investigate key features of boss battles and associated scores (F-ARPG boss-battle repertoire, or FBR) to determine how this balance is achieved. Drawing on the theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1988) and the concept of interactive storytelling (Nam and Kim 2011; Lee 2003), as well as positioning our analyses within the context of ludomusical narrativity (Grasso 2024), we argue that FBR enriches players' transfiguring experiences of the boss battles and their perceptions of narratives—namely those of the boss enemies and the players. Through four case studies, we show how FBR compensates players for the otherwise challenging process of reaching the flow state and accessing these transfiguring experiences; this process we theorize as the "tremendous"–"taxing"–"teasing"–"transfiguring" (T4) flow scenario rewards players with diverse narratives.

Keywords and phrases: FromSoftware (game studio); ludomusicology; boss-battle music; narrativity; product design.

Introduction

FromSoftware's action role-playing games (F-ARPGs), including *Bloodborne*, *Dark Souls III*, *Sekiro*, and *Elden Ring*, are infamous for their difficulty yet consistently gain popularity and support among gaming communities. We investigate boss battles and associated original scores (F-ARPG boss-battle repertoire, or FBR) to determine how this balance is achieved. Drawing on the theory of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1988) and the concept of interactive storytelling (Nam and Kim 2011; Lee 2003), as well as positioning our analyses within the context of ludomusical narrativity (Grasso 2024), we argue that FBR enriches players' transfiguring experiences of the boss battles and their perceptions of narratives—namely those of the boss enemies and the players themselves. Through four case studies, we show how FBR compensates players for the otherwise challenging process of reaching the flow state and accessing the transfiguring experiences, the process we theorize as the "tremendous"–"taxing"–"teasing"–"transfiguring" (T4) flow scenario, and reward them with diverse narratives.

As a partial predecessor of our research, Joana Freitas's (2020) article discusses the boss-battle music of *Dark Souls III* from a similar viewpoint, acknowledging the score

as a "key element for immersion and narrative success to foster the player's involvement and flow" (60). The author, however, does not explore other F-ARPG titles before or after *Dark Souls III*, leaving the development of a systematic methodology for examining FBR as the future research goal for other scholars. Thus, in this introductory discussion, we propose a methodology that is applicable to multiple F-ARPG titles and indeed demonstrate a cross-disciplinary inspiration drawing on music theory, ludomusicology, and product design literature.

1. Background, Design, and Methodology

1.1 The T4 Flow Scenario

From Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1988), the concept of flow has broadly influenced both game design (Hodent 2017, 163; Xu 2024) and game music studies (Ayers 2024, 52n; Freitas 2020, 60). The flow state, in which the players are fully focused or "in the zone," generally occurs when the players naturally discover the sweet spot between increasing arousal (attributed to game design) and increasing efficiency (referring to players' adaptation). While players could go through various scenarios to make such discoveries, we focus on a particular kind of scenario as it is relevant and useful to F-ARPGs and our case studies from boss battles.

For the ease of subsequent discussion, we theorize this scenario as a "tremendous"–"taxing"–"teasing"–"transfiguring" flow scenario (henceforth the T4 flow scenario). "Tremendous" characterizes the first stage of perception in which the battles are felt or regarded by the player as difficult for difficulty's sake—i.e., experiments to challenge how far a player can proceed beyond the upper limit of difficulty that would be accepted or tolerated by average players. "Taxing" indicates the next stage of perception: the battles' difficulties may not be entirely unmanageable but demand arduous trial and error. "Teasing" is an advanced stage of perception: the battles gradually shift the player's perception of gameplay from onerous repetition to manageable, self-assured processes, though partially relying on chance and luck (e.g., "I thought I almost got this boss, until my last attack missed!"). Finally, "transfiguring" is the mature stage of perception in which the battles are understood as ludic opportunities to reach an ultimate flow state and become absorbed in various associated stories.

To see the intuitive relevance of the T4 flow scenario to F-ARPGs, consider Example 1.[1] The unsuccessful run-through of the boss battle in this video clip (ca. 2:30) succinctly exemplifies the T4 flow scenario—except the fourth stage. The boss battle shown in the video clip poses a "tremendous" challenge as the player is thrown into a field full of enemies, traps, and mazes without safe spots, supporters, or direct assistance. Following intense exploration, during which nothing but diegetic noises and ambient sounds are heard, the player steps into an isolated and enclosed boss arena in which they can experience both ruthless aggression from the boss enemy and unsettling nondiegetic music. Indeed, as shown in Example 1, the boss battle is "taxing" and/or "teasing": if the players die in this battle with the brutal enemy, they will have to repeat the whole process, beginning each time with the exploration portion.

Example 1. Run-through from the field to the boss arena of "Champion Gundyr" (Dark Souls III).

1.2 FromSoftware's Action Role-Playing Games and Their Successes

In addition to their intuitive relevance to the T4 flow scenario, several F-ARPG titles such as *Bloodborne* (2015), *Dark Souls III* (2016), *Sekiro* (2019), and *Elden Ring* (2022) also draw attention for their noteworthy successes. These titles have consistently surprised video game journalism upon their release, for two related reasons.[2] First, the listed games, especially *Elden Ring*, have enjoyed constant growth in sales and critical recognition: *Elden Ring* sold 20 million physical and digital copies from 2022 to 2024 (Koselke 2024). Second, this success has been strongly tied to the

[1] Here we would like to state four disclaimers. First, regarding the original audio-visual resources of the notational illustrations and edited video clips, we acknowledge their lawful copyright holders: Sony Interactive Entertainment (for *Bloodborne*), Bandai Namco Entertainment (for *Dark Souls III*), and FromSoftware (for *Sekiro* and *Elden Ring*). Second, our use of the copyrighted materials follows the global convention of transformative fair use. Third, every notational illustration and video edit in this article represents the original works by the primary author and co-author. Fourth, when watching the edited video clips, viewer discretion is recommended because they contain visual and/or auditory expressions that may disturb viewers for reasons such as depiction of violence.

[2] Even though there are other ARPG titles by FromSoftware, which precede (e.g., *Demon's Souls*, *Dark Souls I*, and *Dark Souls II*) or follow (e.g., *Elden Ring Nightreign*) the four listed, we intentionally narrow our definition of F-ARPGs for the following reasons. First, the four listed titles share the identical game engine (i.e., software frameworks central for game development) invented and internally used by FromSoftware, facilitating mutual comparisons of in-game parameters. Second, the four titles show the establishment and polishing of the mature design philosophy by FromSoftware and their ARPG titles (e.g., fierce, action-packed boss battles). Third and last, all these titles show a consistency in creator composition: for instance, Yuka Kitamura, who until recently used to hold a core position within FromSoftware, appears as a credited composer in all four titles. (For an exhaustive list of the composers whose scores are mentioned or examined in our discussion, see Table 1.)

difficulty of each game title. The phenomenon has been noted (e.g., Bishop 2009) since the release of *Demon's Souls* (2009)—one of the earliest predecessors of the titles we grouped above as F-ARPGs and the origin of the persistent belief that FromSoftware gives players uniquely demanding challenges. This belief has been consciously exploited by the leadership of FromSoftware, as described by Hidetaka Miyazaki, the director credited for his core role in F-ARPGs, including *Demon's Souls*:

> If we really wanted the whole world to play the game [*Elden Ring*], we could just crank the difficulty down more and more. But that wasn't the right approach.... Had we taken that approach, I don't think the game would have done what it did, because the sense of achievement that players gain from overcoming these hurdles is such a fundamental part of the experience. Turning down difficulty would strip the game of that joy—which, in my eyes, would break the game itself. (MacDonald 2024)

As implied in Miyazaki's words, F-ARPGs push their difficulty to a degree that could potentially undermine broader sales, yet their consumer base continues to grow. In other words, the quoted statement demonstrates that difficulty and fandom cultivation can be pursued in tandem. This unusual achievement, unsurprisingly, stimulated investigations across multiple disciplines and resulted in a diverse array of related subtopics: the keys of effective game design (Hoedt 2019), critical themes or issues emerging from gameplay experiences (Spokes 2020), and spontaneous cultivations of mutually supportive communities (Brock and Johnson 2022; Robinson et al. 2025), to name a few.

1.3 How FromSoftware Makes Their Games Difficult

In our earlier theorization of the T4 flow scenario, we proposed that a final, "transfiguring," stage may cause players to perceive the gaming experiences as exceptional opportunities for immersion into various stories. Assuming that such experiences also contribute to F-ARPGs' balance between difficulty—i.e., the sensation that characterizes the "tremendous," "taxing," and "teasing" stages of the flow scenario—and fandom cultivation—i.e., the fascination resulting from the "transfiguring" stage and immersive experiences—we propose an analytical approach to the T4 flow scenario that remains attentive to the no-less significant role of music.

Before illustrating this methodology, however, there is background to be addressed: specifically, in which ways are F-ARPGs made to be difficult to play and beat? Though risking oversimplification, a two-track explanation provides this background information: difficulty is reified in general game design, and is realized in boss battles. First, F-ARPGs adhere to general design requirements for action role-playing games (ARPGs). Shaun Musgrave (2017) summarizes these requirements: (1) real-time combat; (2) persistent inventory system for the player's characters; (3) control of only one character at a time; (4) freedom of movement through the environment (controlled by the player) and one-to-one correspondence between clicks, taps, or button presses, and the resulting actions (e.g., attacks, guards, dodges, or runs); (5) requirement for the player to acquire some degree of reflexive skill; (6) experience points, gained by defeating enemies and earning character level-ups; and (7) level-ups that increase the character's stats and/or capabilities. F-ARPGs, meeting these requirements, push each even further to reify an otherwise abstract sensation of difficulty into a set of practical gaming experiences: (1) real-time combat becomes *far stricter* (e.g., invincible time is limited and requires precisely timed actions by the player); (2) the persistent inventory system *does not pause combat when it is controlled by the player*; (3) only one character is under player control at a time, and *only one character is allowed per saved data file*; (4) a character moves around freely and performs various actions, but *at the cost of limited and only gradually replenished stamina*; (5) players need *higher and higher* degrees of reflexive skill to make progress; (6) experience points earn character level-ups but *will be lost if characters die before spending them*; and (7) level-ups make the character stronger but *do not dramatically facilitate general combat*.[3]

Second, boss battles represent the advanced challenges of the already-difficult general game design. Adapting to the peculiarities of the seven enhanced design requirements described above is a prerequisite for the player of F-ARPGs if they wish to beat the unavoidable boss enemies. If these peculiarities explain how the games basically work, the boss battles tend to exponentially increase the difficulty against the degree of player efficiency. The battles do not openly instruct the player on how to increase their efficiency, thus driving the players to tasks more common in classic retro games (that is, the iterative processes of self-directed trial and error). The games therefore demand the players be willing to repeat individual and arduous processes without providing any explicit information as to what went right or wrong in their playing;[4] indeed, F-ARPGs are notorious for giving no feedback beyond "You

[3] Note that *Sekiro* makes several exceptions, though it does not diverge from the general direction of other titles. For instance, its inventory system does pause combat but still forces players to use the selected items within the real-time engagement with enemies. Furthermore, although *Sekiro* does not have the stamina caps limiting the player character's actions, it still puts a precise cap on the character's guarding capacity.

[4] For a relevant study that broadly investigates improved player resilience against the otherwise challenging boss battles of F-ARPGs, see Chushu Ye 2023.

Died" or "Death" messages every time the players fail in the boss battles.[5] (This was shown at the end of the video clip in Example 1.)

1.4 Analytical Concepts and Methodology for FBR

That F-ARPGs are made to be difficult to play and beat—in terms of both general design and boss-battle design—not only reconfirms their relevance to the first three stages of the T4 flow scenario but draws attention to the boss-battle music. The discussion above surely helps us grasp how "tremendous," "taxing," and "teasing" general gameplay and boss battles could feel for inexperienced players, but it also requires consideration of how the "transfiguring" experience is shaped and/or enhanced. While this inquiry can focus on a variety of in-game music or audio examples, our study centers FBR. This repertoire not only realizes generic ludomusical conventions for combat as well as boss battles (see Summers 2024a, chap. 8) but helps the player to appreciate boss battles as tough yet worthwhile challenges.

Clearly, there are many other musical/sonic aspects that warrant ludomusicologists' attention to F-ARPGs, including atmospheric music or sound that affects a player's gameworld exploration (Kamp 2024; Freitas 2025), indicating FBR may not be the only musical case connected to the "transfiguring" stage of the T4 flow scenario. Our choice to focus on FBR lies not only in its affiliation with the tense culmination of the difficulty experienced by the player (boss battles), but in its structural parallels to the boss-battle design that unmistakably invite the existing conceptual frameworks of "ludomusical narrativity" (Grasso 2024) and "interactive storytelling" (Nam and Kim 2011; Lee 2003).

Ludomusical narrativity refers broadly to the various manners through which music gives "narrative depth to [game] character and place" and helps "unite aspects of the story no matter what the player is (is not) doing" (Grasso 2024, 72).[6] Interactive storytelling refers to the stories embedded within and enabled by the interactive systems integrated in digital or physical product designs. Nam and Kim (2011) argue that interactive audio systems can embed narratives of imaginary, amusing organisms within everyday products. Through interactions between user and object—including real-time responses from the object—even a simple product can encourage the generation of narratives. Lee (2003) further specifies this user-driven process of narrative generation: if interactive design is a *product*, stories are *biproducts* embedded within the design or emerging through the interaction between the product and the user; to make this interaction more effective at narrative generation, the product should be able to help the user acquire *unique* and *renewing* experiences every time they interact with the product.

Given that Nam and Kim (2011) characterize the aforementioned interaction as ludic, and that Lee (2003) refers to video games as spatialized exemplars of the same interaction, interactive storytelling is one of the concepts enabling cross-disciplinary collaborations between product design and ludomusicology. This concept supports our methodology for analyzing the T4 flow scenario for three reasons. First, the T4 flow scenario suggests that a player is supposed to repeat these demanding boss battle interactions, and this repetitive interaction is partially comparable with the behaviors an interactive product anticipates from its target users. The T4 flow scenario also suggests that such repetitive interaction nonetheless results in *renewing, constantly changing* experiences instead of consistent and generalizable ones—not unlike the experience a product user acquires from the successful realization of interactive storytelling. Third, the narratives that emerge as the *biproduct* of such experiences once more prove the compatibility between interactive storytelling and the T4 flow scenario, also serving as the conceptual ground for our methodology. If Grasso's (2024) ludomusical narrativity encourages the basic premise that FBR has potential for emerging narratives, interactive storytelling (Nam and Kim 2011; Lee 2003) provides one possible account of how exactly the music contributes to the emerging narratives (i.e., enriching the repetitive but constantly renewing experiences of boss battles).

These narratives may be specified further as follows: (1) a story *emerging from* a carefully designed boss enemy, (2) a story *produced by* a player actively battling the enemy, and (3) enhanced versions of the two stories *perceivable through* music played over the battle. A story *from* the boss is a history to be told regarding the boss enemy, often delivered to the player part-verbally (e.g., the boss making "I" statements) and part-contextually (e.g., the boss's appearances and behaviors)—or entirely contextually. A story *by* the player is their journey to reach the flow stage in the same scenario. The enhanced versions of these two stories emerge when the musical ideas and details, processed and appreciated by the player, generate a distinct affective environment supportive of the given stories.

[5] See also Ayers 2024, 39–40, 54n regarding the sound design of such messages in the *Dark Souls* series.

[6] Note also that game music can serve as a broader informational source, as has been discussed in Megan Lavengood and Evan Williams (2023). Analyzing winter topics and tropes within a game music corpus through a computational methodology, these researchers reveal that composers have employed diverse techniques and materials to turn their game soundtracks into informational indicators of environments and weather.

2. Analytical Case Studies

2.1 Introduction and Overview

In what follows, our central analyses address *Bloodborne*: "Ludwig the Accursed," *Dark Souls III*: "Twin Princes," *Sekiro*: "Demon of Hatred," and *Elden Ring*: "Final Battle." The ludic context of each case study, or what is confronted by anyone following the game's system and facing the given boss-battle design as it is, is illustrated through the T4 flow scenario and its first three stages: how the given boss battle (1) poses a "tremendous" challenge to the expected average level of player efficiency/skill, (2) demands a "taxing" process to figure out a solution, and (3) induces a "teasing" anticipation that the challenge can be handled once a proper flow state is achieved. We also address the fourth, "transfiguring," stage in our analyses. Reaching this stage likely means that the player has already repeated enough interactions to achieve sufficient reflexivity to respond to the boss's maneuvers (and, as a result, the accompanying music), emphasizing the experiences as gradually transformative and renewing rather than merely repetitive. As a result, the player may be able to immerse themselves in the bosses' and their own narratives (i.e., "how I got on top of this battle"). We explicate the "transfiguring" stage as a peak realization of interactive storytelling and specify it through (1) detailed interpretations of the bosses' narratives, (2) estimations of the player's narratives, and (3) analysis of the contributions of the associated FBR, including specific compositional details.

Before moving on to the main analyses, two points deserve acknowledgement. First, what we suggest regarding the T4 flow scenario and interactive storytelling has room for future enhancement, as it naturally invites empirical, ethnographic, and other types of supporting research. We do not claim to know the intent of either the game designers or the composers; rather, we are analyzing this music's potential role in the player's experience, drawing on pertinent scholarship to support our claims. We highlight how each analysis can be effectively rationalized, backing our ultimate argument that FBR performs a vital role in the T4 flow scenario, which in turn explains (if only partially) F-ARPGs' navigation of increasing difficulty and expanding fandom.

Second, our manner of examining compositional details was partially inspired by Richard Anatone's (2023) discussion of Kishōtenketsu. In introducing this traditional Japanese story arc, Anatone notes that, while not well-known to Western audiences, Kishōtenketsu has consistently influenced Japanese fiction, including video games.

Composers (last, first) (alphabetical order)	**Soundtrack titles** (game titles)	**Comments on midway intervention of new ideas/directions**
Kitamura, Yuka	"Twin Princes" (*Dark Souls III*)	Lyrical and continuous melodies in earlier part; choir in dactyl rhythm in later part
	"Demon of Hatred" (*Sekiro*)	Binary structure where concise first part is followed by longer and more stylistically traditional second part
	"Dragon" (*Elden Ring*)	-
	"Malenia, Blade of Miquella" (*Elden Ring*)	C minor in earlier part; G minor in later part
Miyazawa, Shoi	"Divine Beast Dancing Lion" (*Elden Ring*)	F Phrygian scale in earlier part; D double-harmonic major scale in later part
	"Mohg, Lord of Blood" (*Elden Ring*)	B♭ minor in earlier part; D minor in later part
Saitoh, Tsukasa	"Final Battle" (*Elden Ring*)	Brass motive (originating from the title-screen music) in earlier part; mysterious vocalise & choir in later part
	"Margit the Fell Omen" (*Elden Ring*)	-
Suzuki, Nobuyoshi	"Ludwig, the Accursed" (*Bloodborne*)	Less-functional melodies/harmonies in earlier part; more common-practice melodies/harmonies in later part
	"Deacons of the Deep" (*Dark Souls III*)	-
Suzuki, Nobuyoshi, and Kouneva, Penka	"Living Failure" (*Bloodborne*)	Instrumental ostinati in earlier part; homorhythmic choir in Latin in later part
Wandmacher, Michael	"Micolash, Host of the Nightmare" (*Bloodborne*)	-

Table 1. List of FBR case studies and credited composers (table by Primary Author).

Composed of four consecutive words put together as if they form a single word, this term lists four idiosyncratic stages of a narrative represented by Ki (beginning), Shō (process), Ten (turning point), and Ketsu (result). To be specific, if Ki and Shō establish and develop an initial topic, Ten turns the script *rather than* sticking to the original topic and pushing it toward its climax. As a result, Ketsu may not always present the resolution conventional in Western commercial fiction (i.e., the protagonist's success and triumph, or completion of original goals): it may end instead with catastrophe, anticlimax, aftermath, and so on, which may be understood better as the reverberation of Ten. Anatone associates this story arc with his analysis of Nobuo Uematsu's soundtrack for *Final Fantasy VII* (1997). He especially draws attention to the main theme, the "longest and most formally complex main theme in Uematsu's Final Fantasy soundtracks," played in a continuous loop as the player character explores the world map (28). Investigating both its form and motivic development, Anatone argues that the main theme demonstrates a "musical portrayal of the entire game's narrative" and effectively embodies Kishōtenketsu (33).

We find that selected musical examples from FBR operate similarly in that they tend to enhance the in-game (i.e., the bosses') narratives by mapping their compositional details onto such stories. Furthermore, like Uematsu's main theme of *Final Fantasy VII*, our case studies of FBR feature narrativity marked by the midway intervention of new ideas or directions and thus recall Anatone's (2023) characterization of Ten of Kishōtenketsu. Our subsequent analyses accordingly illustrate how new ideas or directions intervene midway in each selected case, including in works by a team of composers. (For a complete list of the composers and music included in this article, please refer to Table 1; where relevant, commentary on the midway intervention of new ideas/directions is found in the rightmost column.)

2.2 *Bloodborne*, "Ludwig, the Accursed"

The first FBR case study is *Bloodborne*: "Ludwig, the Accursed," composed by Nobuyoshi Suzuki. The opening cello solo, shown in the first system of Example 2 and heard in 0:00–0:14 of the supplementary video, introduces an alternation between pitch-classes A and A♭ (i.e., from the strings in the first measure to the cello in the first and second measures and back to the strings in the third measure). As shown in the male choir and cello solo in the second system (0:16–0:24), this alternation is then extended and solidified through other A–A♭ alternations, highlighting the emergent idea of oscillation and resulting in less-functional harmonies anchored on a central pitch or chord: until a more functional and goal-directed E-minor tonality emerges (discussed below), pitch-class D or the D-minor triad (shown in the second system) performs the role of the central pitch or chord.

The prominence of oscillation and its impact on less-functional harmonies ends later with the introduction of E-minor melodies and harmonies that imply common practice tonality or diatonicism. A mysterious, homorhythmic interlude sung by mixed choir (shown in the third and fourth systems and 0:32–1:08) concludes with the unmistakable emergence of the $D\sharp^{\circ 7}$ or $vii^{\circ 7}$ in E minor. In the fifth system (1:08–1:23), the majestic brass resolves this chord to i in E, establishing E-minor tonality as the new main idea (as Example 2 indicates by the shifting meter signatures, this establishment is also marked by the new meter, $\frac{6}{8}$).

The compositional shift from circling oscillation to more goal-directed harmonies/melodies is related to its associated boss battle. This can be understood through an overview of the battle's structure and the challenges likely to be presented to players by the boss, Ludwig. The structure is straightforward according to contemporary video game convention. As the player steps into the boss arena, the first phase of the battle immediately begins and the player must confront Ludwig, a gigantic monster whose aggression seems irrational, unstoppable, and lethal (for the corresponding music, see the first two systems in Example 2 and 0:05–0:24).[7] If/when the player manages to reduce Ludwig's health bar (shown at the bottom of the game screen) to a specific amount, an interlude cutscene is played and presents an unexpected turn: Ludwig delivers a monologue to a glowing magic sword, not used or seen in the first phase of the battle, then picks up the sword to further test the player's skills (the third and fourth systems in Example 2 and 0:32–1:08). The second and final phase of the battle follows, this time presenting Ludwig as a knight skillfully using the sword (the fifth system in Example 2 and 1:08–1:23).

This overall structure accounts for the first three stages of the T4 flow scenario. Having to fight the same boss twice, once as a monster on a rampage and then as a skilled knight, the player surely feels an overwhelming, "tremendous" difficulty. The player could attempt to improve their tactics through "taxing" retries, during which they may return at any point to frustration with the "teasing" situations ("I almost beat the boss but I died so I have to start all over again!").

[7] Note that an opening cinematic cutscene is played only for the first time when the player enters the arena (not included in the supplementary video, for the sake of conciseness). In this cutscene, a nameless victim of Ludwig narrates their suffering and fear about Ludwig while Ludwig's unintelligible roar is heard.



Example 2. Oscillation as the initial idea and then the emergence of the E-minor tonality in "Ludwig, the Accursed." Transcribed by Primary Author.

Let us imagine that a less experienced player (described above), after many tries, acquires the minimum efficiency to reach the otherwise hard-to-earn flow state and then becomes capable of processing the overall boss battle and music. One possible experience at that point is that of interactive storytelling, in which Ludwig's narrative and the player's personal narrative become perceivable to the player throughout the player's interaction with the boss-battle design and music. As the boss-battle overview implies, Ludwig's narrative is clear enough, albeit not verbally narrated. Ludwig was probably originally a warrior possessing extraordinary swordsmanship and a noble spirit. His degenerated state as a screaming monster is thus not merely a plot device to offer a particular boss battle to the player, but a tragedy in which the boss's true identity is imprisoned by madness. In this context, the first phase of the battle may be understood as more than a conflict between the player and the violent Ludwig: it contains the tension between the player and the madness distorting Ludwig's true self. With the cutscene that signals the liberation of Ludwig from madness and the beginning of the subsequent phase of the battle, there is a new story for the boss enemy: that of the redeemed swordsman. Furthermore, in the process of becoming more efficient throughout both phases of the battle, the player may be able to develop their own story: they are performing an act of valor and redeeming Ludwig by reversing his degeneration.

If the player also becomes attentive to the musical details unfolding in accordance with their progress, the music may present—to this engaged listener—an emergent mapping between the compositional ideas and the stories discussed above. The shift from oscillation to E-minor tonality acts as a musical portrayal of Ludwig as the prisoner locked in his own madness (and the player's strenuous efforts to subdue that madness) and the transformation of Ludwig into the redeemed warrior (and the player's response to him).

Our interpretation of the oscillation observed in the first and second systems of Example 2 is inspired by preexisting perceptions of oscillation, found in various literature on functional or nonfunctional harmonies (Ramage 2020; Taruskin 1985; Malawey 2010). These perceptions show that oscillation can represent refusal, confinement, and/or stasis, and we deem the same perceptions are applicable to ludomusical narrativity and the specific case of the nondiegetic music played over the first phase of the given boss battle. Ludwig is at an impasse in this phase, possessed by persistent madness, and the player must break this deadlock by confronting Ludwig.

Maxwell Ramage (2020) calls "any alternation between two harmonies that goes beyond traditional tonal syntax" a "transcendental oscillation," because it tends to refuse functional harmonic progressions (287). The oscillation at the opening of Example 2 not only fits this description but indicates octatonicism as a mechanism to refuse the functional harmonies: for instance, pitch classes A and A♭ and the chord tones of a D-minor triad can all be embedded in OCT (2,3) (D, E♭, F, G♭, A♭, A, B, C). This not only supports the assumed octatonicism itself, but accounts for how the opening oscillation in Example 2 could be mapped onto Ludwig, the creature *trapped* in madness, in the first phase of the battle: as Richard Taruskin (1985) notes, an octatonic collection is one of the "outgrowths of circles of thirds" and "for Russian composers, evocative of evil magic" (93). Additionally, due to its avoidance of functional harmonies, the oscillation in Example 2 may also represent stasis or impasse, an impression commonly found in pop harmonies (see Malawey 2010).

In addition to the inspiration from music theory literature, there are two more reasons why the E-minor tonality can be interpreted as a new musical idea related to the narratives emerging in the second phase of the battle. One is that this tonic-oriented progression mirrors the player's determined response to the redeemed boss. The other is that this implied tonality now involves the D-minor triad as part of the diatonic progression in E minor: the D-minor triad now serves as ♭vii rather than the central chord (as it had in the first two systems of Example 2). We interpret this as a compositional parallel to Ludwig's liberation from possession, and his commitment to making a last stand as a noble warrior.

Suzuki's original score for "Ludwig, the Accursed" presents a musical portrait of the boss enemy through the abstract musical embodiment of impasse versus breakthrough. The music compellingly compensates for the overwhelming pressure of the boss battle by staging the player's combat as more than a difficulty for difficulty's sake: it reminds the player that their combat is an act of valor to redeem Ludwig, by tracing his arc from fallen beast to chivalrous warrior.

2.3 *Dark Souls III*, "Twin Princes"

The second case study is *Dark Souls III*: "Twin Princes," composed by Yuka Kitamura. This example initially establishes continuous, lyrical C-minor melodies (Example 3, mm. 1–15, and 0:51–1:38 in the supplementary video). The uninterrupted quality is achieved through the simple tonic–dominant alternation and the absence of rests, while the lyrical quality is realized by the constant conversations between melodic lines: as seen in the score, each line features steady rhythms and balances leaps and steps, forming a texture consisting mostly of oblique and similar motion. In mm. 16–21 (1:39–1:56), the melodies are varied through



Example 3. Continuous, lyrical C-minor melodies as the initial idea and then the emergence of the dactyl rhythm in "Twin Princes" (two-part transcription/reduction). Transcribed by Primary Author.

accelerated rhythms and cadential progression to a PAC; this is then followed by enhanced lyricism, characterized by a mellifluous violin solo (mm. 22–31 and 1:56–2:27).

Continuous lyricism as the initial compositional idea is later replaced by a homorhythmic choir highlighting a long–short–short dactyl rhythm (mm. 32–39 and 2:28–2:58). While the sense of continuity is maintained by harmonic progressions that fail to reach an authentic cadence and instead keep arriving at half cadences (e.g., in m. 39), the overarching rhythmic figure dominates the remainder of the music and confirms its role as the new main idea, positioning the entire boss-battle music as a two-part musical accompaniment to the boss battle.

The boss battle associated with this two-part music follows a series of interactions/events structurally resembling that of *Bloodborne*, "Ludwig": an opening cutscene with a speech by the boss character, an initial phase of confrontation, an intervening cutscene that progresses the narrative, and a second phase of confrontation in which the boss intensifies their attacks. In the opening cinematic cutscene, the physically weak but determined Prince Lothric greets the player and establishes his narrative by saying that he shall not sacrifice himself for the ritual the player has to complete to save the world, though it demands Lothric's sacrifice (0:00–0:50 in the supplementary video of Example 3). In the first phase, the player confronts Lorian, the older brother and protector of Lothric (0:51–1:56). An intervening cutscene is then played, in which Lothric makes another speech that strongly encourages his brother Lorian to keep resisting the player and the demand of sacrifice (1:57–2:27). The second, final phase of the battle follows this cutscene and the player must fight both Lothric and Lorian at the same time (2:28–2:58). Because the player is obliged to defeat one boss (Lorian) and then deal with *two* enemies (Lothric and Lorian) in the second phase, the resulting T4 flow scenario involves the "tremendous" challenge posed by the undeterred boss character(s), the "taxing" endeavor of returning to the initial combat with Lorian every time the player dies in the second phase, and the "teasing" situation in which the second phase cannot end without defeating Lothric once and for all. As shown in Example 3 (2:28–2:58), Lothric is protected on the back of Lorian in the second phase, never yielding to the player; to defeat this younger prince and finish the entire battle, the player must deal a certain amount of direct damages to Lothric.

If the player acquires enough proficiency to complete the boss battle, three rewards of interactive storytelling may become perceivable. One is the bosses' narrative. The overarching context of the battle is that Prince Lothric must be sacrificed so that the player's character can conduct a ritual with Lothric's remains and thus delay the destruction of the world; as the player cannot progress in the plot of *Dark*

Souls III without Lothric's dead body, the boss's will to live is his final resistance before he is subdued and sacrificed. For the same reason, Lorian is designed to be unyielding in his role as Lothric's protector. A second story emerges through the player-boss interaction: the player's gradual recognition of their role as the antagonist of a real-time tragedy; the player's growing proficiency draws Lothric closer to his death and Lorian closer to his defeat.

Third, if the player is attentive to the music, they may perceive the mapping between the compositional ideas and the narratives described above. The first main idea, continuous lyricism (mm. 1–31), is associated with both the first phase and interrupting cutscene (1:57–2:27). This can be understood as a representation of Lothric's feeble body and contrastingly strong will to defy his destiny: the delicate lyricism represents the boss character's physical vulnerability while the melodic continuity represents his determination. The second main idea, the homorhythmic choir in dactyl rhythm (mm. 32–39 and 2:28–2:58), is associated with the second phase of the battle. In Western classical music, the dactyl rhythm often appears to be the signifier of death, such as in Purcell's *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary*, Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, or Schubert's "Death and the Maiden;" the idea may thus be read as foreshadowing the cruel destiny awaiting Lothric, and the player's role in this ritual.[8]

"Twin Princes" effectively portrays the nature of this boss battle as fated to a tragic end. Assisting the narratives of both the enemies and the player, the music can help the player understand why they should confront the bosses by staging the abstract but pervasive drama of will-to-survive versus destined death, and by encouraging the player to immerse themself in the inherent drama.

2.4 *Sekiro*, "Demon of Hatred"

The third case study, *Sekiro*: "Demon of Hatred," was also composed by Kitamura. The music presents a variation of rounded binary form fused with stylistic elements from traditional Japanese music. With room for looping—a common convention in boss-battle music, where partial repetition accommodates players' different playtimes—the structure seems to present every section for the given formal convention: introduction, main theme(s), contrasting theme, returning main theme, and concluding theme, though with some peculiarities, as we will discuss below. (For the corresponding video clip, refer to the supplementary video of Example 4 in which the subtitles indicate which section of the binary form is being played.)

Three elements from traditional Japanese music are equally significant to the boss-battle score. These elements are (1) a traditional Japanese flute, *shinobue*; (2) a minor-pentatonic collection, specifically a distinctive scale in-between the *yona-nuki* minor scale and the *Miyako-bushi* scale;[9] and (3) marked harmonic idiosyncrasies in the shinobue-violin duet that presents the contrasting theme (as we will discuss below, this duet is notable for its delicate two-voice counterpoint).

When the binary form turns out to be open-ended rather than self-contained, the structural and stylistic elements suggest that the boss-battle music not only stays receptive to looping, conventional in boss-battle music, but reflects narrativity by highlighting traditional Japanese musical elements. To make sense of this, the binary structure itself warrants further attention. Though we use the term "concluding" for the ease of discussion, the concluding theme in Example 4 hardly offers a proper melodic closure to the entire binary form. The concluding theme instead presents a descent (C♯–B–A–G♯) passed from the shinobue to the violin, providing a natural return to the contrasting theme and implied C♯ minor key area; the G♯ of the final descent can either link smoothly to the first pitch of the violin part (G♯) or proceed to that of the shinobue part (C♯). This return to the contrasting theme (Example 4)—where the shinobue and violin duet highlights marked harmonic idiosyncrasies—is repeated indefinitely until the boss battle is finished. As a result, the player confronting the boss enemy, specifically during the latter half of the battle, is likely to be exposed to the recurring returns of the contrasting theme, closely associated with the Japanese traditional elements mentioned above and also connected to the narratives of the battle.

If the binary form in this music is prone to repetition that foregrounds Japanese traditional elements (connected to the emerging narratives), the boss-battle design of "Demon of Hatred" itself features another kind of repetition

[8] For a discussion of the cultural tradition underlying Schubert's uses of dactyl rhythms for symbolizing death, see Karl Michael Komma 1994; for broader research on the historical developments of various rhythmic symbolisms for death in Western music, see Jörg Riedlbauer 1996.

[9] A conventional yona-nuki minor scale on F♯ would be F♯, G♯, A, C♯, D, F♯. If this scale is reordered to start from G♯, the output matches the scale consistently implied in "Demon of Hatred": G♯, A, C♯, D, F♯, G♯ (note that, just for the first three pitches, this also recalls a G♯Miyako-bushi scale though the last two pitches differ from the authentic one: the authentic G♯ Miyako-bushi would be G♯, A, C♯, D♯, E, G♯). Despite such an ambiguity, it is suggestive that both the music—though with Main Theme Pt. 2 being less so—and the reordered yona-nuki minor underline the G♯-D tritone more explicitly than the typical ordering of yona-nuki minor. (Main Theme Pt. 2 is less affiliated with the reordered yona-nuki scale because F𝄪, B♯, and C♯ are raised by a quarter tone at times; each of these pitches adds intonations to the ones expected for the implied scale or does not even belong to the scale.)

Binary form in "Demon of Hatred"
in interaction with the boss battle phases

What musically happens when the battle is in the larger first phase

Soon after the battle starts,
Introduction and **Main Theme Pt. 1, 2**
are played in order

→

Then, if the larger first phase of the battle continues, music returns to somewhere within **Introduction** and therefrom repeats everything listed in order



Example 4. Rounded binary form and the emergence of Japanese stylistic elements in "Demon of Hatred" (transcription/reduction with limited rhythmic/melodic parts). Transcribed by Primary Author.

What musically happens when the battle is in the larger second phase

Soon after the battle enters the larger second phase,
Contrasting Theme,
Main Theme Pt. 2 (Returning), and
Concluding Theme Pt. 1 & **Pt. 2**
are played in order

⟶

Then, if the second phase of the battle continues, music returns to **Contrasting Theme** and therefrom repeats everything listed in order



Example 4. *(Continued)*.

in response. As the player enters the boss arena, a gigantic burning boss enemy, the Demon of Hatred, is wreaking havoc on the training ground of a medieval Japanese castle; the player must stop the destruction and subdue the enemy once and for all. This mission will be completed by delivering three deathblows to the enemy. However, each deathblow requires a full-scale battle as the boss rises again after each of the first two deathblows with a fully replenished health bar and intensifying aggression (see 0:55 for the moment right after the first deathblow in the video); note also that the first deathblow triggers the second section in the binary form, the contrasting theme. The player, from this moment on, must survive the increasing difficulty until they manage to deal the second and then third (last) deathblows (2:10 in Example 4); the third attack not only instantly terminates the battle but cuts the music short no matter which section of the binary form was being played, implying the priority of the processes to reach the last deathblow over the structure of the associated music—and the priority of the emergent narrative over the conclusion of the battle (we will address this narrative in detail below). This eccentric, ruthless boss battle accounts for a T4 flow scenario in which the player faces a "tremendous" challenge in learning how to deal an effective deathblow, a "taxing" trial-and-error approach to survive through the initial and second deathblows, and a "teasing" situation where the third and last deathblow remains hard-to-reach or narrowly missed.

The "transfiguring" stage of the scenario may be particularly rewarding for the tenacious player who manages to proceed to the third and last critical attack. One possible reward is that the boss enemy's narrative becomes clear. Taking the shape of an *oni* (a rough Japanese counterpart of "ogre," though a demonic humanoid creature would be more accurate), this enemy—adopted from traditional Japanese horror stories—persists in their destruction and aggression out of anguish rather than as an indiscriminate threat. The video clip of Example 4 shows that the boss enemy often expresses their pain through bodily gestures (0:55–1:05). The infernal fire the Demon of Hatred wears can be understood as torture, which holds them in eternal suffering. In this way, the enemy is both a formidable creature and a hopeless victim, one who awaits the player's brave action of granting them permanent rest.

Another reward is the player's gradual awareness of their role in the combat. By stopping the enemy from falling deeper into pain and granting them a dignified death, the player is encouraged to finish the battle not as an act of extermination, but of mercy. Given that the enemy character was originally a supporting human NPC (non-player character), the entire battle may also be viewed as a tragic farewell to the player's ex-comrade who struggled not to succumb to the bloodlust and wrath rooted in their violent past as a notorious ninja but failed, resulting in their degeneration and metamorphosis: when the player delivers the last deathblow and finishes the battle, the boss thanks the player before vanishing in flame (Example 4, 2:04–2:33).

These experiences, described above, highlight the rewards of interactive storytelling and may be further enriched when the player recognizes the synergy between the two compositional ideas and the narratives. We interpret that the rounded binary structure, purposely lacking a proper closing theme, acts as a frame that loosely outlines the entire battle: the larger first half (intro and main theme) of the binary form is precisely mapped onto the battle from the beginning to the first deathblow; the second half (contrasting theme, returning main theme, and concluding theme in loop) is mapped onto the battle after the first deathblow and until the last one. Note that the battle after the first blow takes more musical themes than the battle before the first deathblow, implying that the music aptly responds to the nature of this battle phase as an indefinitely extensive, upper-level challenge. As it is likely more "taxing," time-consuming, and frustrating ("teasing") than the earlier phase, this painstaking process in which the player attempts to execute the second and last deathblows without dying effectively makes the associated T4 flow scenario exceptionally intense—and simultaneously makes the player's immersion in the narratives more rewarding.

The traditional Japanese elements, stressed especially in the repetition of the contrasting theme, arguably enrich the sorrowful narrative underlying the extensive and challenging combat. The expressive convention of the shinobue, well established in Japanese multimedia fiction, contributes to this effect. Consider, for one famous example, Tōru Takemitsu's score for *Ran* (dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1985). As Craig Lysy's (2018) review observes, Takemitsu's use of the shinobue is justified not only by the authenticity of the timbre as a Japanese period instrument, but by its versatility that charges the score with "wailing," "ambient," "playful," "lyrical," "plaintive," and "piercing" effects. The soundtrack for *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* (2022) is also worth mentioning: though the setting of this game is distant from Japanese period drama, the developers clearly draw on the melancholic expressivity of the shinobue in multiple tracks (see Nintendo 2022).

The affective significance of traditional Japanese elements is also supported by the yona-nuki minor scale, which often represents folkloric and/or melancholic tastes in Japanese popular music, and by the harmonic idiosyncrasies in the shinobue-violin duet from the contrasting theme.[10] The duet makes room for narrativity as its two-voice counterpoint is charged with crunchy dissonances

[10] One iconic example of the yona-nuki minor scale in Japanese

(see the reduction below the contrasting theme in Example 4). The intervallic language tempts us to hear an abstract representation of the boss, player, and their fierce conflict as the two instruments appear to be the two equal treble voices. In general, both parts maintain their individuality and simultaneously emulate a dazzling duel through marked rhythmic exchanges (e.g., the first two measures of the contrasting theme), voice exchanges (e.g., the violin and shinobue from the fourth measure), and contrary motion (e.g., the fifth to sixth measures). While similar or parallel motions also occur, consonances constantly alternate with dissonances and vice versa, as if capturing the tug-of-war between the player and the boss (e.g., the last two measures). What is more, the two voices continually return to the harmonic interval of the tritone (e.g., the G♯–D tritone in the fourth and sixth measures), possibly representing both the continuing pain in the boss and the unresolved tension between the player and the boss. Though these interpretations are subjective, they demonstrate the rich narrative potential that arises from the interaction of these features.

"Demon of Hatred" demonstrates another case of how boss-battle music performs an important role in the flow scenario and the "transfiguring" narrative experiences. While loosely framing the entire battle with the rounded binary form variant, the music focuses on repetition that puts more weight on the contrasting B section. By doing so, Kitamura's composition defies the conventional priority of the expository A section in classical rounded binary and instead draws the player's attention to the stylistic elements foregrounded by the B section, namely the traditional Japanese musical elements. The aesthetic of sorrow and affection in these elements, in turn, helps the player to become immersed in the tragic drama between the player and boss that develops over the larger second part of the battle.

2.5 *Elden Ring*, "Final Battle"

The fourth case study of FBR is *Elden Ring*: "Final Battle," composed by Tsukasa Saitoh. It first establishes straightforward thematic cyclicity. The lobby or title-screen music of *Elden Ring* presents a four-note brass motive (A–B–A–G♯) over the lower A pedal; this returns in "Final Battle," suggesting that the player is confronting one of the ultimate goals of their journey (mm. 1–8 in Example 5 or 0:00–0:13 in the supplementary video).[11]

However, as the boss battle enters the second phase, the cyclical motive gives way to a contrasting, softer idea. This new idea also originates from the lobby music, if only partially, specifically the harp introduction that precedes the brass motive. Note that, whereas the original harp intro comprises just two oscillating chords over an A pedal (Am and $B^{\varnothing 4}_{2}$) and a three-note figure (E–A–B), the version in "Final Battle" presents the preexisting harp material (mm. 10–13 and 0:18–0:39) with an added soprano vocalise (mm. 14–19 and 0:40–1:19). This duet, not at all prefigured in the lobby music, is followed by another unprecedented musical idea: a choir singing unintelligible lyrics over colorful, modal harmonies (e.g., B♭M to Dm to Am^{4}_{2} imply D Aeolian scale in mm. 20–25 and 1:20–1:40). Functioning as a miniature contrasting idea against the preceding harp-voice duet centered on A, this choir is followed by a similar duet, resulting in an embedded ternary structure defined by harmonic and textural elements (mm. 28–40 and 1:41–2:14).

The bold move from one compositional idea to another—notably in correspondence to the first and second phases of the battle and reversing the order of the original lobby music (i.e., the harp intro and then the brass motive)—suggests more than a cyclicity between the lobby music and "Final Battle." Through the series of ideas unforeseen in the lobby music, such as the harp-voice duet and choir, the music for the second phase mirrors a special narrative underlying the entire boss battle. Located inside a massive tree, Erdtree, the first boss arena represents the very heart of the game's world, despite being unveiled for the first time in this battle. In this meaningful place, the player confronts Radagon of the Golden Order, one of the most powerful and influential rulers of the world of *Elden Ring*—or Lands Between. Fighting Radagon thus appears to be the final trial in the player's journey to become the new ruler of Lands Between. However, there is a plot twist: as soon as the player defeats Radagon, a mysterious creature named Elden Beast rises from the ground and teleports both itself and the player to an otherworldly space where numerous trees, as tall and big as Erdtree, have already risen into this space. It is implied that the Elden Beast is a transcendental creature from outer space, cultivating countless Erdtrees as the nexuses through which it controls

popular music is enka. Per Okada Maki and Gerald Groemer 1991, the yona-nuki minor scale preserves intervallic traits of more traditional, folk-oriented Japanese scales despite its relatively young history; the authors suggest, for this reason, that this scale has been suitable for enka—the Japanese love songs self-claimed to be a successor of "traditional sentiment" (286).

[11] It is also noteworthy that an almost identical motive (ascending then descending by semitone, e.g., D♯–E–D♯–D♮) appears in the main theme of *Demon's Souls*, the game that has become the unshakable foundation for subsequent APRG titles by FromSoftware (*Dark Souls I–III*, *Bloodborne*, and *Elden Ring*). Both the earliest and latest successes of the studio thus share similar musical motives, though it is unclear whether it is coincidental or intended.



Example 5. *Cyclical brass motive as the initial idea and then the emergence of the harp and vocal ensemble in "Final Battle" (two-part transcription/reduction). Transcribed by Primary Author.*

Lands Between and possibly other worlds across the universe; in this new boss arena, Elden Beast turns hostile to the player and begins the second phase of the battle.

One possible T4 flow scenario for this battle would be shaped by both boss enemies and the shifting nature of combat. If facing Radagon in the first phase is a climax of the player's journey to become the new ruler of Lands Between, facing Elden Beast in the second phase is a lesson about the ultimate truth of Lands Between: this alien creature was manipulating Lands Between and other worlds across the universe. Adapting to this dramatic shift is a "tremendous" challenge, while learning how to manage the different threats from Radagon and Elden Beast is a "taxing" and even "teasing" process—the player must go back to the duel with Radagon whenever they die in combat with Elden Beast.

What interactive narratives, then, could a player with mature efficiencies access through the entire battle design? We offer an interpretation of this narrative as a revelation of both the truth about *Elden Ring*'s universe and the player's position in the game. First, the sovereignty of Lands Between turns out to belong to neither the existing figures (e.g., Radagon) nor the new challengers (e.g., the player). Second, even though the player may survive and vanquish the hidden ruler of the world, Elden Beast, this victory does not confirm that the battles are truly over; who is to say that no other creatures will intervene and manipulate Lands Between? Therefore, the player's position after the completion of the battle may be closer to that of a spectator than a protagonist, one who just learned the ultimate truth about *Elden Ring*'s world; it is still uncertain if this spectator will be able to change the precarious relationship between Lands Between and mysterious invaders from outer space.

These potential narratives, representing some of the final experiences that *Elden Ring* aims to offer to players, are further emphasized by the boss-battle music.[12] One way by which the music enhances the boss-battle narratives through its compositional details is associating the two different musical styles—that is, the muscular brass motive and the softer harp-voice ensemble—with the two enemies confronted respectively in the first and second phases. By doing so, the music indicates that the two bosses are fun-

[12] This nihilism offers a notable contrast from a case discussed in Thomas Yee 2020. In his discussion of the celebrated JPRG series *Xenoblade Chronicles*, Yee (2020) observes that the death of god serves as the core narrative theme for the boss battles and the central musical trope of the associated soundtracks. Those narrative themes and musical tropes are driven towards a positive, active subtext, unlike the empty, inert counterpart in *Elden Ring* and "Final Battle."

damentally different in nature. Radagon is a formidable antagonist who vanquishes his foes with both physical and spiritual powers. Elden Beast is a mysterious creature without a clear physical form, whose origin is not specifically explained but implied to be outer space. Assumed to be the avatar of what is called the Greater Will—the invisible, transcendent being that claims dominion over Lands Between but does not directly communicate with most living things in the Lands—Elden Beast's message is likewise not entirely clear (just like the unintelligible choir lyrics) though it does not hesitate to eliminate the player and continue ruling the world from the shadows.

The other way by which the music enhances these narratives is by mirroring the unhealed rupture between the two world views. If the muscular brass motive of the first phase of battle reflects a view that Lands Between is for warriors, challengers, and their conflicts, then the music for the second phase may be responding to a different world view: that Lands Between is in fact ruled by a transcendental figure from outer space, whose mysterious origin is musically captured by the otherworldly, unintelligible soprano and choir.

The two different compositional ideas and styles, without any sign of mediation, give way to the fading sounds of shattering glass when the battle is over (Video Example 5, 2:14–2:20). When listening to this sound effect, which follows the musical fade-in, one may recall both the literal image and the abstract metaphor of "shattering." For players attentive to this repeated metaphorical expression in *Elden Ring* (e.g., the narration of the cutscene played when the player selects a new game in the lobby screen), the shattering noises heard after "Final Battle" may be another layer of nihilism over the one already charging the music. If the two unmediated contrasting styles reveal the fractured rulership represented by Radagon the hero and Elden Beast the alien, the sound effect seems to signify a nihilistic truth that the same rulership, once shattered, may never become a complete whole again—even though the player vanquishes both the nominal (Radagon) and hidden (Elden Beast) rulers of Lands Between.

3. More on Ludomusical Narrativity and Interactive Storytelling

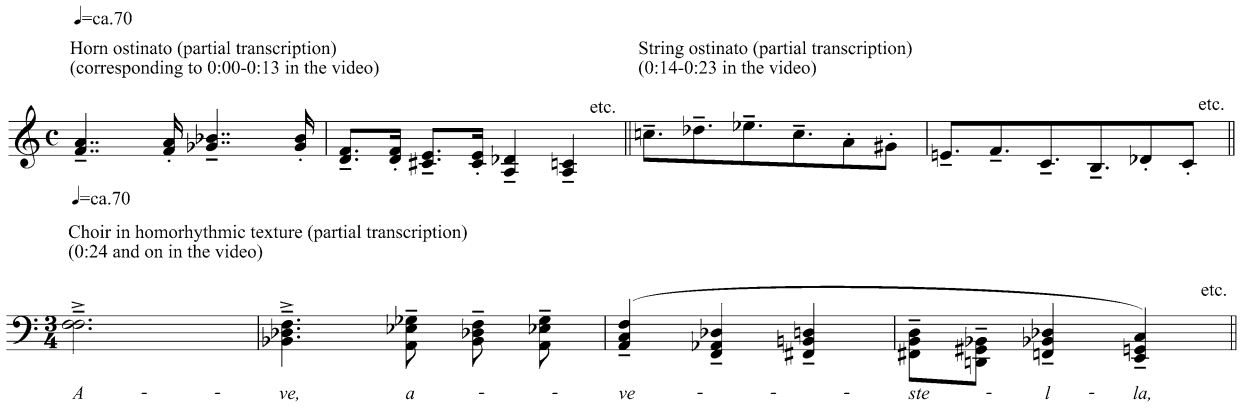
Our analyses of the four case studies illustrate how features of F-ARPG boss battles intersect with the associated musical features, contributing to the demanding but unique player experiences—specifically the "transfiguring" stage in the T4 flow scenario that functions as the peak of interactive storytelling. We believe that such experiences, enabled by the interplay of musical and design features, help *Bloodborne*, *Dark Souls III*, *Sekiro*, and *Elden Ring* to compromise neither the general difficulty nor the broader growth of fandom. When the boss battles expose fresh players to both the challenging enemy designs and original nondiegetic music, the flow state is frustratingly hard to reach but firmly tied to the "transfiguring" experiences of narrative(s). By exploring how players could progress through the T4 flow scenario, and how they could immerse themselves into narratives with the assistance of the music, our analyses show the unusual value of FBR in not only research on ludomusical narrativity but the experience of interactive storytelling.

In the remainder of this article, we introduce a few supplementary cases that further emphasize the relevance of both ludomusical narrativity and interactive storytelling to the boss battles and their nondiegetic scores in F-ARPGs. As we mentioned in the earlier part of the article, interactive storytelling comes from the discipline of product design; while seemingly remote from ludomusicology and music analysis, it nonetheless has potential as a conceptual framework to account for the stories emerging through repetitive yet gradually transformative interactions between a computer-programmed audio system (which, of course, includes FBR) and a digital product user (which includes F-ARPG players).

In the previous discussion, our primary analyses relied on the T4 flow scenario to make sense of the compositional ideas and their contribution to interactive storytelling; the following FBR cases are characterized by immediacy and straightforwardness rather than gradual development of the flow scenario. These examples show how relatively simple compositional ideas can immediately affect a player's interactions during boss battles, enriching emergent stories through (1) exoticization of boss enemies, (2) sonic portrayal of physical traits of boss enemies or boss arenas, and (3) representation of the changing states of aggression of boss enemies.

The FBR examples related to the exoticization of boss enemies often rely on musical tropes. Sean Atkinson (2019) frames musical tropes as related to topics but much more flexible; whereas a topic would be "largely unaltered and presented in a normative context," a trope may present creative and dynamic treatment of one or more topics so that new meanings can be signified ([4]).[13] While Atkinson's

[13] Note that, like Atkinson (2019), we rely on the common understanding of the term topic, drawing upon the literature by Kofi Agawu, Danuta Mirka, and other scholars engaged with Topic Theory. Agawu 1991, one of the seminal works in this literature, defines topic as a musical material/sign "significant only within a cultural context that recognizes the conventional associations of certain kinds of musical material" (16). While the context referred to by the author is mostly the Classical era, researchers are considering other cultural contexts in their recent contributions to topic



Example 6. *Choir in Latin as a trope in "Living Failure." Transcribed by Primary Author.*

(2019) theorization of tropes is primarily interested in flying sequences in video games, we find that his term works with *Bloodborne*: "Living Failure," *Elden Ring*: "Divine Beast Dancing Lion," and other examples from FBR.

In *Bloodborne*: "Living Failure," composed by Suzuki and Penka Kouneva, at least two religion-associated topics (homophonic mixed choir and ecclesiastical Latin lyrics) are combined into a trope that characterizes the Otherness of the boss enemies called the Living Failures.[14] This trope emerges at the peak of the tension built up through the two impulsive ostinato patterns (see the first system of Example 6), presenting a surprising contrast for inexperienced players: a choir homophonically intones the Latin phrase, "Ave, ave stella!" ("Hail, hail the stars!") while the boss enemies raise their hands and summon meteorites from the void (see the second system of Example 6 and 0:24–0:40 in the supplementary video). By presenting the boss enemies as religious conjurers of astronomical phenomena—whose powers are as incomprehensible as the Latin is to non-Latin speakers—the musical trope in "Living Failure" effectively alienates the boss enemies from the player, though the trope itself draws upon familiar, religion-associated topics.[15]

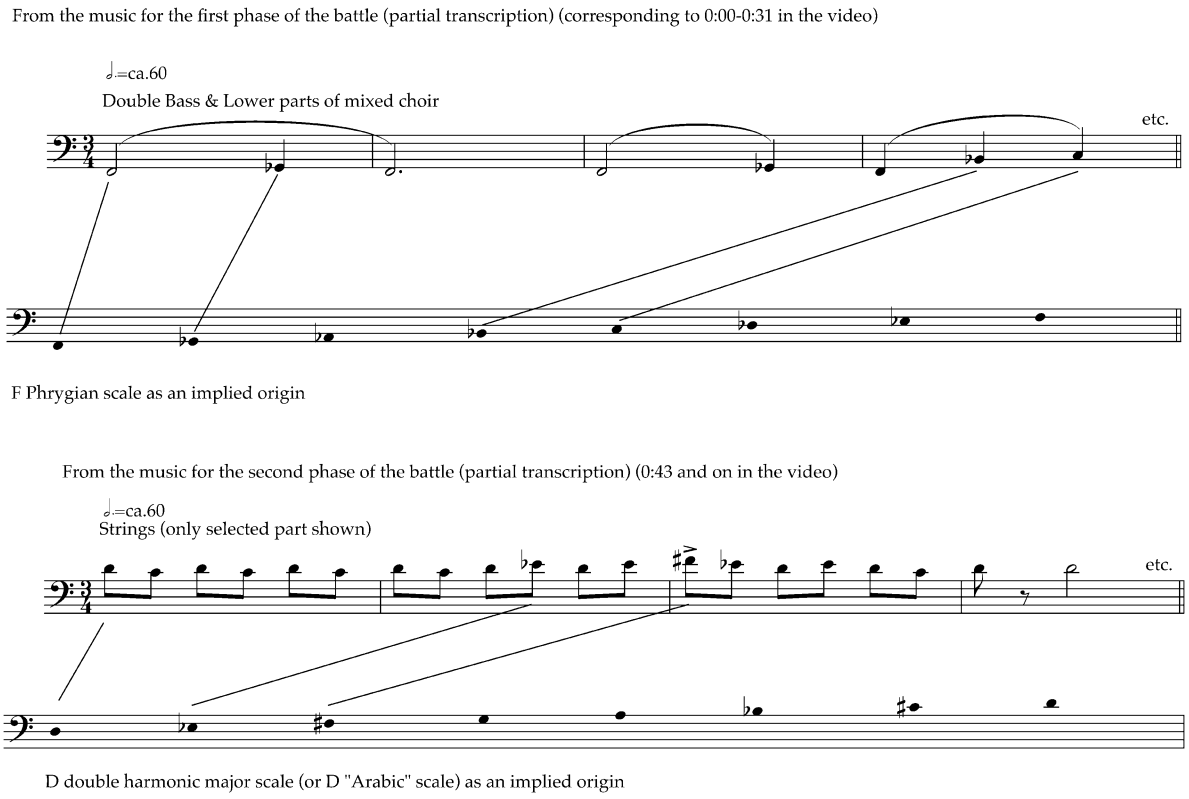
In *Elden Ring*: "Divine Beast Dancing Lion," composed by Shoi Miyazawa, ♭2̂ and the augmented second are combined into a trope highly reminiscent of the double harmonic major scale or the so-called "Arabic" scale. As Example 7 shows, the ♭2̂ appears in the form of G♭ (♭2̂) above F (1̂) in the music for the first phase of the battle, implying an F-Phrygian scale as the possible origin. Then the augmented-second interval between E♭ and F♯ emerges in the music for the second phase, this time foregrounding an obvious affinity with the "Arabic" scale and thus a Eurocentric, exoticist undertone. While the boss design does not directly refer to Middle Eastern cultural stereotypes, the musical idea nonetheless contributes to the exoticization of a real-world non-Western culture: as the boss's visual design suggests in the video, there is a clear reference to the Chinese lion mask dance. Given that this dance tradition is prominent in Chinese-speaking communities, the choice of Arabic scale (even if fragmental) may be odd and even problematic, as the trope both perpetuates Western exoticist musical traditions and dilutes the Chinese cultural origin of the boss design.

FBR examples highlighting the physical traits of boss enemies or spaces largely utilize gestural ideas. In *Elden Ring*: "Dragon," composed by Kitamura, the chromatic descending motion from the G♭ to F (mm. 10–13, m. 17 in Example 8) induces a sense of strong gravitational pull typical of ♭2̂ resolving toward the F tonic; in other words, the example can be interpreted as the musical embodiment of a heavy and enormous enemy (such as a dragon) diving toward the player. While this effect seems self-explanatory, the same idea also recalls Wagner's *Leitmotiv* for giants from *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876), whether intentionally or not (see Example 9), supporting this connection between

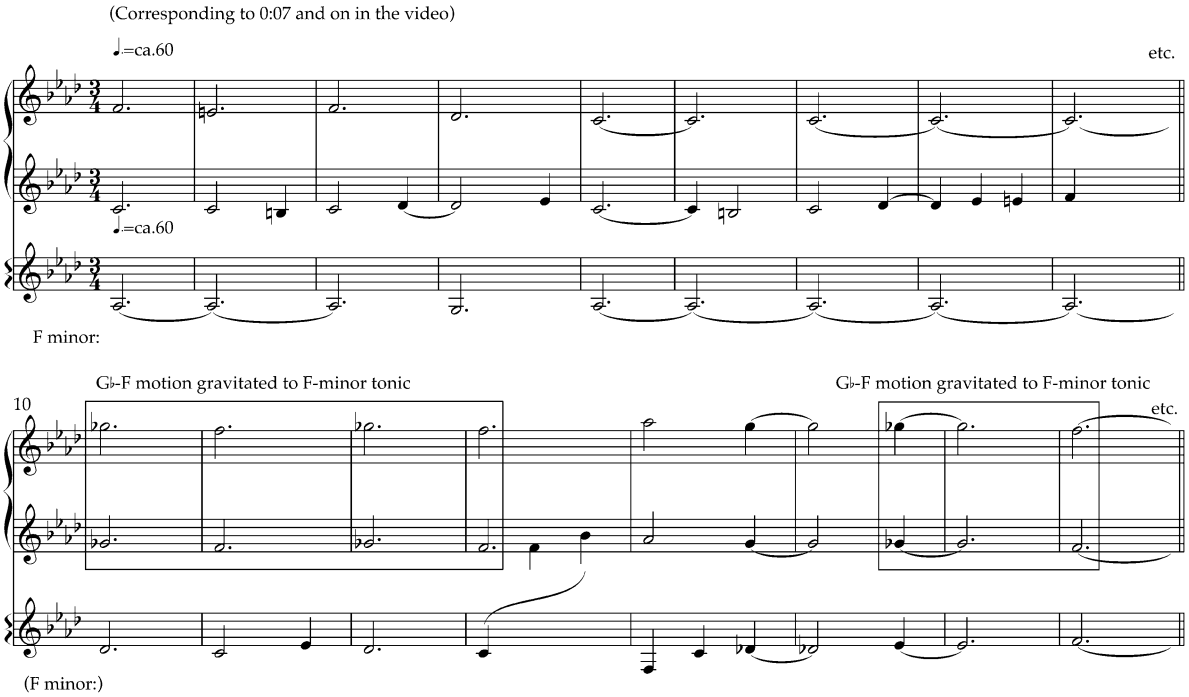
studies. Similarly, our discussion of topics emphasizes the musical materials/signs familiar and associable for a general audience of twentieth-century and contemporary multimedia fictions—the fantasy genre in particular.

[14] Lavengood's (2024) discussion of the topics common in film music precedes our discussion as it covers similar uses of choirs and Latin texts under what the author categorizes as the "ominous chant" topic. Isabella van Elferen (2013) also observes ecclesiastical choir and plainchant as the ideas often summoned for an essential musical trope or imagination in medievalist fantasy fictions (5–11).

[15] *Dark Souls III*: "Deacons of the Deep," composed by Suzuki, deserves mention as another relevant example that transforms religion-associated topics into a trope of alien Others. Over the battle between the player and a group of intimidating, degenerate priests, the score features a male choir singing a hymn-like melody in the mid-to-lower register, accompanied by a grim-sounding pipe organ.



Example 7. The ♭2̂ and augmented seconds in "Divine Beast Dancing Lion" (part transcription). Transcribed by Primary Author.



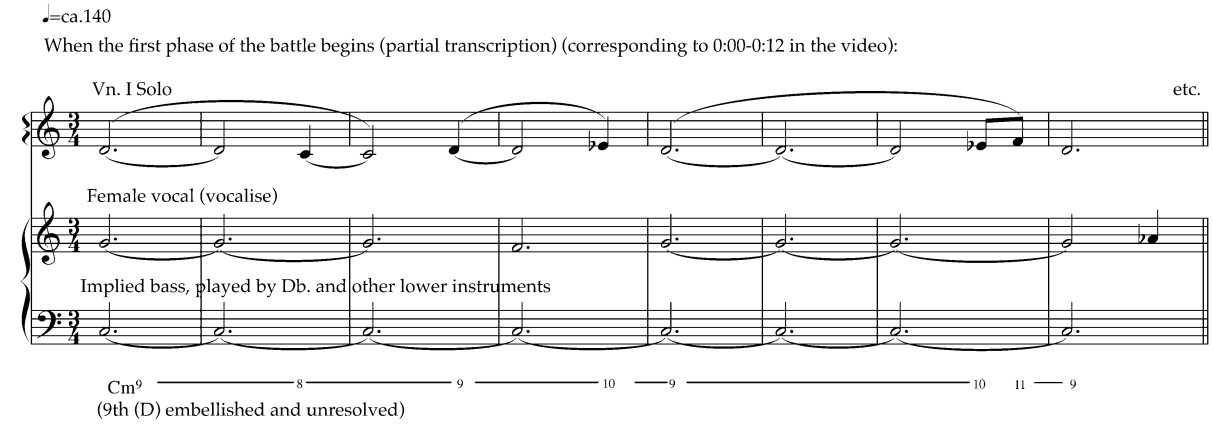
Example 8. Descending chromatic motion as the gestural representation in "Dragon" (three-part transcription/reduction) (compare with Wagner's Leitmotiv for giants in F minor). Transcribed by Primary Author.



Example 9. Wagner's Leitmotiv for giants (transposed to F minor). Typeset by Primary Author.



Example 10. Sinking stepwise melodies as gestural representation in "Margit the Fell Omen" (two-part transcription/reduction). Transcribed by Primary Author.



Example 11. Harmonic near-transposition between the openings of the first and second sections in "Malenia, Blade of Miquella" (three-part transcription/reduction). Transcribed by Primary Author.



Example 12. Tonal transposition between the first and second sections of "Mohg, Lord of Blood" (three-part transcription/reduction). Transcribed by Primary Author.

musical gesture and size. In *Elden Ring*: "Margit the Fell Omen," composed by Saitoh, the sinking stepwise melodic loop, in which every note is accentuated, gesturally emulates the boss enemy's ominous footsteps as they corner inexperienced players in combat (see Example 10).[16]

Examples from FBR that reflect the changing aggressions of boss enemies often use "expressive tonality." Coined originally by Robert Bailey (1977), this term was later adapted to support Frank Lehman's discussion of harmonic intensification in film scores (Lehman 2018, 54). Expressive tonality refers to a chord or melody that is transposed in either direction: upward to produce intensification or downward to ease tension. Additionally, it tends to involve various patterns of transposition including, but not limited to, semitone and whole-tone transpositions, and modal flexibility (either preserving the original mode or shifting to its parallel).

The following two examples from FBR present instances of upward, mode-preserving transpositions (note

[16] While our discussion focuses on two examples that foreground the physical traits or movements of boss characters, there is a notable example focusing on the movement the boss enemy forces the player to repeat during the boss battle. In *Bloodborne*: "Micolash, Host of the Nightmare," composed by Michael Wandmacher, the boss keeps fleeing and thus forces the player to repeatedly climb the stairs to catch up to them. This peculiar spatiality is gesturally represented by the piano and its ceaselessly repeating sixteenth-note figures.

that the first example does not realize a literal transposition, while the second one does). In *Elden Ring*: "Malenia, Blade of Miquella," composed by Kitamura (Example 11), the music for the first phase of the battle begins with a Cm9 sonority with an embellished, unresolved chordal ninth (i.e., 9th–8th–9th–10th–9th, and so on), whereas the cinematic cutscene leading to the second phase opens with a GmM7 sonority. This near transposition from Cm9 to GmM7 introduces a tense dissonance known as the "Hitchcock Chord." This chord, employed by Bernard Herrmann in *Psycho* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), combines a minor triad with major seventh.[17] In the music that opens the intervening cutscene (0:12–0:25 in the supplementary video of Example 11), the major seventh in the GmM7 delivers an unsettling impression originating from its tendency toward a perfect octave resolution. We feel this tendency musically responds to the visual transformation of the boss enemy, Malenia, from a defeated warrior to a divine being with supernatural powers.

In *Elden Ring*: "Mohg, Lord of Blood," composed by Miyazawa (Example 12), the first phase of this boss battle is coupled with the B♭-minor tonality (mm. 1–5); however, the beginning of the second phase suddenly modulates upward to the key of D minor (mm. 6–10). Coinciding with the boss enemy's strengthening ritual—such as the repeated incantation of "nihil!" ("zero!" in Latin) (0:40–0:44 in the supplementary video of Example 12)—this ascending key transposition serves as a straightforward representation of the intensifying battle, as in the previous example.

Conclusion

Focusing on boss-battle design and associated original scores, our study has shown that F-ARPGs offer a rich and promising repository of case studies. By combining and building upon the theory of flow and the concepts of ludomusical narrativity and interactive storytelling, the FBR case studies demonstrate how boss-battle music can contribute to the distinctive achievement of F-ARPGs, namely the equal pursuits of higher difficulty and fandom growth. For players exploring these games for the first time, reaching the flow state and becoming proficient in boss battles may offer "tremendous," "taxing," and "teasing" challenges. Nonetheless, whether through simple or abstract musical ideas, FBR noticeably impacts players' active perception—once they develop efficiency—of both bosses' stories and their own progress. The resulting immersion of the player in these narratives explains how boss battles in F-ARPGs can be "transfiguring," and thus fascinating, experiences for players.

While our future research will address the lack of ethnographic primary sources and the speculative limits of our methodology, we strongly believe that our detailed analyses have proven the potential of cross-disciplinary conversations. The flow scenario, ludomusical narrativity, and interactive storytelling can serve as effective conceptual frameworks for further analysis beyond the boundaries of F-ARPGs and/or the medieval fantasy genre. We hope that these concepts will inspire more researchers to explore how the interaction of music and game design contributes to players' perception and internal development through repetitive but transformative experiences.

Notes on Author Contributions

Primary Author has developed the methodology and the discussions of the music-theoretical analyses, and has structured the manuscript.

Co-Author has developed the cross-disciplinary discussions and helped Primary Author to integrate such discussions into the analytical methodology.

This manuscript represents the latest complete revision resulting from the cooperative and collaborative processes by Primary Author and Co-Author.

References

Agawu, V. Kofi. 1991. *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music*. Princeton University Press.

Anatone, Richard. 2023. "Kishōtenketsu as Leitmotif: Storytelling and Musical Meaning in the Main Theme to *Final Fantasy VII*." *Journal of Sound and Music in Games* 4 (4): 15–53.

Atkinson, Sean. 2019. "Soaring Through the Sky: Topics and Tropes in Video Game Music." *Music Theory Online* 25 (2). https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.19.25.2/mto.19.25.2.atkinson.html.

Ayers, William R. 2024. "Scoring, Sounding, and Silencing Death: Musical Depictions of Failure in Coherent and Incoherent Worlds—Part 1." *Music and the Moving Image* 17 (2): 35–55.

Bailey, Robert. 1977. "The Structure of the 'Ring' and Its Evolution." *Nineteenth Century Music* 1 (1): 48–61.

Bishop, Sam. 2009. "*Demon's Souls* Review." *IGN*, October 9, 2009 (updated May 10, 2012). https://www.ign.com/articles/2009/10/08/demons-souls-review.

Brock, Tom, and Mark R. Johnson. 2022. "Video Gaming as Craft Consumption." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 22 (3): 598–614.

[17] For an accessible survey of the nicknamed chord and its deployment by Herrmann for *Psycho*, see Summers 2024b.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1988. "The Flow Experience and Its Significance for Human Psychology." In *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, edited by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Selega Csikszentmihalyi, 15–35. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freitas, Joana. 2020. "From Epic Fail to Epic Music: Music, Silence and Failure on 'Dark Souls 3.'" *Journal of Sound, Silence, Image and Technology* 3: 55–74.

———. 2025. "Uncanny Landscapes and Cosy Dungeons: From Sonic Spaces to the Musical Narratives of *Elden Ring* and *Dark Souls*." In *Music, Sound and Identity in Video Games*, edited by Lidia López Gómez, 157–175. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Grasso, Julianne. 2024. "Ludomusical Narrativity: Sound and Music as Structures of Play." In *The Oxford Handbook of Video Game Music and Sound*, edited by William Gibbons and Mark Grimshaw, 66–87. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hodent, Celia. 2017. *The Gamer's Brain: How Neuroscience and UX Can Impact Video Game Design*. CRC Press. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315154725.

Hoedt, Madelon. 2019. *Narrative Design and Authorship in* Bloodborne*: An Analysis of the Horror Videogame*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Kamp, Michiel. 2024. "Atmosphere as a Concept in Video Game Music Discourse." In *Music and Sonic Environments in Video Games*, edited by Kate Galloway and Elizabeth Hambleton, 236–252. New York: Routledge.

Komma, Karl Michael. 1994. "'Gib Mir Deine Hand': Zu Franz Schuberts Musik Vom Tode." *International Journal of Musicology* 3: 133–149.

Koselke, Anna. 2024. "Elden Ring Was an 'Enormous Success,' But Hidetaka Miyazaki Says That Doesn't Mean The Open-World Genre Will 'Become The New Standard' for Future FromSoftware Games." *Gamesradar+*, June 18, 2024. https://www.gamesradar.com/games/action-rpg/elden-ring-was-an-enormous-success-but-hidetaka-miyazaki-says-that-doesnt-mean-the-open-world-genre-will-become-the-new-standard-for-future-fromsoftware-games/.

Lavengood, Megan. 2024. "Topics." *Theory for 20th/21st-c. Music*. https://musi216.meganlavengood.com/mm-lessons/topics/.

Lavengood, Megan, and Evan Williams. 2023. "The Common Cold: Using Computational Musicology to Define the Winter Topic in Video Game Music." *Music Theory Online* 29 (1). https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.23.29.1/mto.23.29.1.lavengoodwilliams.html.

Lee, JunHee. 2003. "Structural Design of Interactive Storytelling." *Archives of Design Research* 16 (4).

Lehman, Frank. 2018. *Hollywood Harmony: Musical Wonder and the Sound of Cinema*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lysy, Craig. 2018. "*RAN* – Tôru Takemitsu." *MOVIE MUSIC UK*, August 27, 2018. https://moviemusicuk.us/2018/08/27/ran-toru-takemitsu-2/.

MacDonald, Keza. 2024. "'I Have Always Felt the World Was a Harsh Place': Elden Ring's Hidetaka Miyazaki on Why He May Never Stop Making Games." *The Guardian*, June 21, 2024. https://www.theguardian.com/games/article/2024/jun/21/hidetaka-miyazaki-fromsoftware-elden-ring-shadow-erdtree.

Maki, Okada, and Gerald Groemer. 1991. "Musical Characteristics of Enka." *Popular Music* 10 (3): 283–303.

Malawey, Victoria. 2010. "Harmonic Stasis and Oscillation in Björk's *Medúlla*." *Music Theory Online* 16 (1). https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.10.16.1/mto.10.16.1.malawey.html.

Musgrave, Shaun. 2017. "RPG Reload Glossary—The Origins of Action-RPGs." *Toucharcade*, July 13, 2017. https://toucharcade.com/2017/07/13/rpg-reload-glossary-the-origins-of-action-rpgs/.

Nam, Tek-Jin, and Changwon Kim. 2011. "Design by Tangible Stories: Enriching Interactive Everyday Products with Ludic Value." *International Journal of Design* 5 (1): 85–98.

Nintendo. 2022. "Ask the Developer Vol. 6: *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* — Part 2." *Nintendo*, July 26, 2022. https://www.nintendo.com/us/whatsnew/ask-the-developer-vol-6-xenoblade-chronicles-3-part-2/.

Ramage, Maxwell. 2020. "Repetitive Variety and Other Balancing Acts: Debussy's Transcendental Oscillations." *Music Theory and Analysis* 7 (2): 287–320.

Riedlbauer, Jörg. 1996. "Welchem Rhythmus Folgt Der Tod? Zur Diskussion Eines Rhythmischen Todes-Topos'." *Die Musikforschung* 49 (3): 234–252.

Robinson, Bradley, André Czauderna, and Sam von Gillern. 2025. "'I Think I Get Why Y'all Do This Now': Reckoning With *Elden Ring*'s Difficulty in an Online Affinity Space." *Games and Culture* 20 (3): 316–334.

Spokes, Matthew. 2020. *Gaming and the Virtual Sublime: Rhetoric, Awe, Fear, and Death in Contemporary Video Games*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

Summers, Tim. 2024a. *Pixel Soundtracks*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

———. 2024b. "Bernard Herrmann's Film Music: *Psycho* and others." Royal Holloway, University of London. https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/media/19436/herrmann%20teachinghub.pdf.

Taruskin, Richard. 1985. "Chernomor to Kashchei: Harmonic Sorcery, or, Stravinsky's 'Angle.'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 38 (1): 72–142.

van Elferen, Isabella. 2013. "Fantasy Music: Epic Soundtracks, Magical Instruments, Musical Metaphysics." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 24 (1): 4–24.

Xu, Libuyu. 2024. "The Effect of Game Experience on Flow Zone." In *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Global Politics and Socio-Humanities*. https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/73/20241051.

Ye, Chushu. 2023. "Exploring Resilience Building in Soulsborne Games." Master's thesis, Uppsala Universitet.

Yee, Thomas B. 2020. "Battle Hymn of the God-Slayers: Troping Rock and Sacred Music Topics in *Xenoblade Chronicles*." *Journal of Sound and Music in Games* 1 (1): 2–19.

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 24–47

Freewheeling Strophic Form*

by Nancy Murphy

Abstract. In 1960s singer-songwriter music, several well-known artists demonstrated a version of strophic form in which each verse contains a single line of music that repeats with different lyrics. This article proposes the concept of *freewheeling strophic form* to analyze such verses with a three-part construction: opening lines, a variable number of repeating lines, and a refrain. The "freewheeling" nature of this form results from a local sense of narrative motion and musical stasis in the repeating lines and a larger-scale flexibility in verse lengths depending on the number of repetitions. I begin the article by exploring how freewheeling strophic form relates to srdc song structure and possible sources in cumulative and enumerative songs. Then, I analyze music by Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, and Buffy Sainte-Marie to illustrate how freewheeling strophic form and its verse-chorus and AABA variants add interest and aliveness to singer-songwriter songs with repeating formal units.

Keywords and phrases: Popular music; form; strophic form; singer-songwriter; 1960s.

He's taught in his school
From the start by the rule
That the laws are with him
To protect his white skin
To keep up his hate
So he never thinks straight
'Bout the shape that he's in
But it ain't him to blame
He's only a pawn in their game

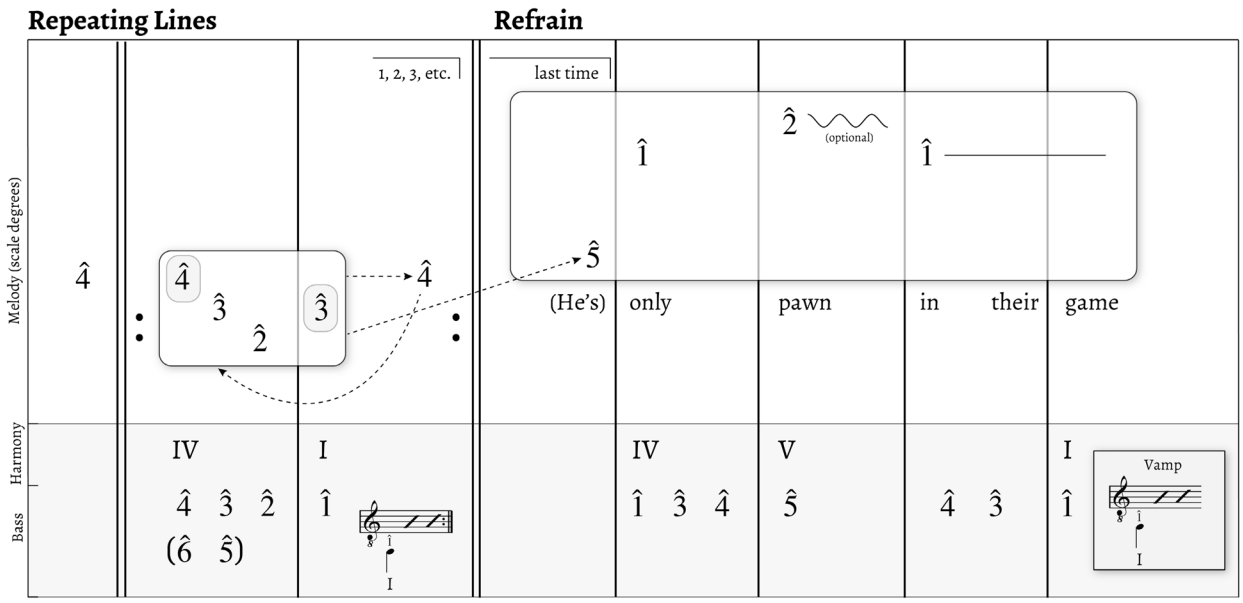
Bob Dylan, "Only a Pawn in Their Game" (1964), excerpt from Verse 3

Introduction

When reading Bob Dylan's lyrics, those who know the song "Only a Pawn in Their Game" can likely hear the repeating melody in their heads that sets Dylan's text. Even those who are not familiar with the recording could find themselves attending to a pattern of rhyme and stress: each line has two strong syllables ("He's **taught** in his **school** / From the **start** by the **rule**," etc.) with end rhymes pairing into couplets.[1] This structure continues until the end of the stanza at which point the two-beat pattern is disrupted by the three strong beats of the final line: "He's **on**-ly a **pawn** in their **game**." The overall result is a series of two-beat segments that culminate in a three-beat refrain.

* The method of song mapping presented in this study originated during a 2013 meeting with my dissertation advisor, Dr. John Roeder. Keeping the idea in the back of my mind for many years, I finally assembled this research for a 2023 presentation at the University of British Columbia for a symposium in honor of John's retirement. I dedicate this article to him and his lasting impact on the field of music theory, particularly for those of us fortunate enough to study with him at UBC.

[1] The lyrical line "So he never thinks straight" has several possibilities for more than two text stresses. But at this point in the stanza, the prevailing two-beat pattern is established enough to suggest stresses on the first syllable of "**nev**-er" and on "**straight**," which matches how Dylan sings it on his studio recording.



Example 1. Dylan, "Only a Pawn," repeated lines and refrain mapping.

The melodic pattern in Dylan's song reinforces the structure established in the lyrics, with repeating lines—featuring two-beat units cycling through a melodic pattern spanning 4̂–3̂—followed by a refrain. In Example 1,[2] I map out the melody of Dylan's repeating lines and refrain. The top half of the diagram (with the white background) shows the pitch structure in scale degrees where placement on the y-axis represents pitch height. The bottom half of the diagram (with the gray background) includes the chord progression in Roman numerals with bass scale degrees below.[3] This notation style intentionally avoids notated pitches and rhythms to focus on melodic and harmonic patterns, with vertical lines indicating measures. Dylan cycles through his repeating line (within the repeat signs around the first two bars of Example 1) eight times in Verse 3 before exiting to the different melodic and harmonic structure of his refrain. Video Example 1 shows the trajectory of Dylan's repeating lines (green) and refrain (pink) for Verse 3, with lyrics included below the diagram as they arise in the song.

Video Example 1. Dylan, "Only a Pawn," Verse 3 repeating lines and refrain trajectory.

The entire verse has a three-part organization (Example 2) in which Dylan presents three *opening lines* (in blue), then falls into a pattern of melodic and harmonic material (green) in his *repeating lines*, and finally releases to the *refrain* (pink). Stressed syllables in Dylan's performance for the repeating lines are highlighted in boldface. Looking more broadly at the entire song shows a similar three-part structure in each strophe of "Only a Pawn" (Example 3), with opening lines progressing to repeating lines and then a refrain. But Dylan, being the type of singer who avoids predictability, adds further interest, cycling through the melodic pattern of his repeating lines a different number of times for each verse. This creates an interesting formal flexibility in which the verses of his strophic form are different lengths.

If this flexibility was unique to "Only a Pawn," it would merely be an interesting quirk of this one Dylan song. However, this flexible form also occurs elsewhere. First, it appears in folk sources—such as turn-of-the-century traditional folk songs and songs by folk singers like Pete Seeger whose careers began in the 1940s and overlapped with the 1960s folk revival—that influenced Dylan and his fellow singer-songwriters. Second, this formal flexibility also occurs in several Dylan songs, a few of which

[2] Unless otherwise noted, I am using studio recordings for the analyses in this study.

[3] In this song, I also include a "vamp" pattern in the guitar on tonic harmony (following Rings 2013) that Dylan uses to fill in space between phrases and verses. This notation style resembles Nashville Number System scores in that the diagram for an entire song could fit on a single page, allowing for ease of comparing repeated formal sections. In all instances in this study, the diagrams illustrate the structural details of only one particular performance, usually the studio recording. Though it could be possible to compare different recordings of the same song, singers like Bob Dylan usually make (sometimes significant) changes to their songs between performances.

Opening lines	The deputy sheriffs, the soldiers, the governors get paid And the marshals and cops get the same But the poor white man's used in the hands of them all like a tool
Repeating lines	He's **taught** in his **school** From the **start** by the **rule** That the **laws** are with **him** To pro**tect** his white **skin** To **keep** up his **hate** So he **nev**er thinks **straight** 'Bout the **shape** that he's **in** But it **ain't** him to **blame**
Refrain	He's only a pawn in their game

Example 2. Three-part structure for "Only a Pawn," Verse 3.

	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4	Verse 5
Opening lines	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Repeating lines	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
	Refrain	4 5 6 7	4 5 6 7	4 5 6	4
		Refrain	8	**Refrain**	**Refrain**
			Refrain		

Example 3. Three-part structure for all verses of "Only a Pawn" with different numbers of repetitions for the repeating lines.

have lyrics on topics of political significance in the 1960s. And third, it arises in strophic and AABA songs by Dylan's 1960s contemporaries, Paul Simon and Buffy Sainte-Marie, suggesting it was a songwriting possibility that permeated the singer-songwriter genre, available to artists in this (primarily) solo performance practice as a method of variation, adding interest to songs with repeating formal units.

In this article I draw on my previous studies of singer-songwriter music to analyze this flexible formal structure as *freewheeling strophic form*. As I explore below, this form seems to arise from strophic sources but also occurs in singer-songwriter songs with repeating verse units, like verse-chorus form and AABA. In this study I analyze the seven extant examples in this repertoire that contain verses that expand or contract depending on the number of internal repeating lines.[4] Example 4 summarizes the seven songs in this study. Three are from Dylan and model freewheeling strophic form: "Only a Pawn in Their Game" (1964), "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" (1963), and "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" (1964). Two others from his repertoire—"Who Killed Davey Moore" (written in 1963) and "Mr. Tambourine Man" (1965)—demonstrate how a freewheeling formal structure maps onto verse-chorus form. Two exam-

[4] For this project I surveyed the music of the singer-songwriters who demonstrate flexible meter, as explored in Murphy (2023). My determination was that the performance practice of these artists made them more likely to include flexible features like freewheeling strophic form in their songs. Because this form is so closely tied to strophic form, its use diminishes as 1960s popular songwriting trends toward verse-chorus forms.

Artist	Song	Freewheeling Form Type
Bob Dylan	"Only a Pawn in Their Game"	strophic
	"A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall"	strophic
	"The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll"	strophic
Paul Simon	"A Most Peculiar Man"	strophic
Bob Dylan	"Who Killed Davey Moore?"	verse-chorus
	"Mr. Tambourine Man"	verse–chorus
Buffy Sainte-Marie	"Hey, Little Bird"	AABA

Example 4. Summary of songs in this study.

ples outside of Dylan's repertoire show how other artists adapted freewheeling structures to their own songwriting styles. Paul Simon's "A Most Peculiar Man" (1965) explores his own modifications to freewheeling strophic form while Buffy Sainte-Marie's song "Hey, Little Bird" (1967) demonstrates how a freewheeling structure can arise in AABA form.

I begin this study by briefly summarizing the expectations for strophic form analysis, particularly for structures in which verses are varied with each repetition. I then explore the origins of freewheeling strophic form in the cumulative and enumerative strophic forms from early twentieth-century traditional song sources. After this I briefly analyze several of Pete Seeger's songs for children that employ cumulative or enumerative strophic form. Finally, I analyze how freewheeling strophic form and its variants arise in 1960s singer-songwriter music as a storytelling method, tied in some cases to topical protest songwriting. Through these analyses I illustrate how freewheeling strophic forms take the principles of cumulative and enumerative songs further, creating flexibility of melody, phrase, and form in ways that convey the creative songwriting approaches of each of these three artists within their broader tradition of musical practice.[5]

1.1 Strophic Form

In popular music, the term "strophic form" refers to the repetition of a formal unit that has the same harmonic and melodic material but different lyrics each iteration. John Covach (2005, 73) uses the term "simple verse" to describe strophic form, as does Jeffrey Ensign (2015, 33), referencing the repeating units as "verses." Drew Nobile (2020, 125–147) refers to this as strophic form, acknowledging "simple verse form" is a synonymous term. Walter Everett (2008, 141) notes that structures with "only a single formal section" are common in folk songs.

The terms "verse" and "strophe" are used interchangeably in analysis of strophic song forms. In this study I follow Nobile (2020) and others with a preference for the term "verse" rather than "strophe" for ease of comparing freewheeling strophic form with its verse–chorus variants. In strophic form and AABA form, the verses (or "A sections") typically end with a lyrically and melodically invariant unit called a refrain that acts as the final line of the verse.[6]

Popular music scholars also observe a possible "statement–restatement–departure–conclusion" (srdc) structure for the verses of strophic form (Everett 1999; Summach 2011; Nobile 2020). In such cases, the "statement" and "restatement" lines could map onto the opening lines, the "departure" as the repeating line, and "conclusion" mapping onto the refrain.[7] Though the verse structures have some similarities, I prefer not to use srdc in this study because it foregrounds an immediate repetition of melodic material at the beginning of a verse, which does not always occur in singer-songwriter strophic form. Additionally, the songs in this study vary in the number of opening lines, sometimes using entirely different melodic material for each. As a result, I prefer the category of "opening lines," which offers more possibilities for verse beginnings without the expectations for immediate content repetition suggested by the srdc paradigm.

[5] Throughout this article I use the term "freewheeling strophic form(s)" as a placeholder for forms with repeating sections that expand and contract the way the strophic versions of this structure do. Though the formal types discussed in this article are all "freewheeling" forms, freewheeling strophic form serves as a sort of progenitor from which the other formal variants–verse-chorus and AABA–arise.

[6] In mid-century folk songs this most often occurs as a "tail refrain" at the end of each strophe.

[7] The srdc structure was first introduced in Everett (1999); for more on srdc in strophic form, see Summach (2011) and Nobile (2020, 39–69).

There is, however, a strong correlation between the "repeating line" unit of freewheeling strophic form and the possibilities for repetition in the "departure" lines of the srdc structure. Jay Summach (2011, 15) explores such repetition in his analysis of "Sugar Shack" by Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs, in which the "d" section of the srdc is extended to six bars through an "extra" repetition of two-bar units in this passage. The fragmentation within "d" repeats harmonic and melodic material, in this case one too many times, to create momentum and delay the "c" refrain.[8] The use of the term "fragmentation" here intentionally references sentential structure, where shorter units build energy toward the cadence. We will see a similar effect from the repeating lines of freewheeling strophic form.

Mid-century popular music is not the only place that modifications to strophic form arise. Victoria Malawey (2014, 8), for example, explores the possibilities for modified strophic form in Amy Beach songs. On a spectrum of formal possibilities from strophic ("maximal recurring material") to through-composed ("minimal recurring material"), Malawey includes two categories between these poles: "Minor Modified Strophic," which has recurring material with some minor changes, and "Major Modified Strophic," which has recurring material with some significant changes.[9] Beach's songs in the former category retain melodic structure between strophes, with slight alterations to texture, harmony, and/or rhythm. Malawey distinguishes this from the latter category, in which more "major" changes occur to features such as melody, rhythm, and/or harmony, replacing or adding to strophic design. Similar ideas arise in studies of developing variation, though I would argue that change is expected in these cases, and therefore not as noteworthy as a modified strophic form.[10]

1.2 "Freewheeling" Strophic Form

It could certainly be possible to describe the 1960s songs in this study as examples of modified strophic form. Following Malawey's categorizations, the features of songs like "Only a Pawn" demonstrate alterations to harmony and rhythm, sometimes also to melodies, that would classify as either minor or major modified strophic. However, it is important to distinguish between the two types of variation at play in this study. On the one hand, there's the natural variation that occurs between verses resulting from the self-accompanied singer-songwriter performance practice. On the other, there is the formal variation that results from the changing number of repeating lines.

The term "modified" does not quite capture the formal features of the strophic forms in this study, nor does it account for the quality of aliveness that results from the expansion and contraction of strophes in this music and how that impacts storytelling. The concept of *freewheeling strophic form* attempts to get closer to the structure and sensations offered by such songs. The term "freewheeling" is a clear reference to the title of Dylan's 1963 album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, an album on which one of this study's examples ("A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall") was released. It's also a reference to the duality of action and inaction that arises in activities like cycling, when riders can coast without needing to move the pedals. The analogue here is musical motion—in the sense of sounds unfolding over time—without progression through formal units. As I demonstrate with the video examples in this study, a song can progress narratively, with new information arising each time a lyrical line is added, but also be inactive due to the repetitive melodic material that extended the verse, preventing movement through the larger form. This technique creates both motion *and* pause, which has the effect of building tension that desires release. Much like the fragmentation in sentence structures and the repeating "d" sections of srdc structures, the repeating lines of freewheeling strophic form build up expectation for closure and, as we shall see in the 1960s songs, sometimes do so in unpredictable ways, often in service of lyrical narratives.

2.1 Cumulative and Enumerative Strophic Songs

Freewheeling strophic songs are related to sources in traditional and folk music from the early twentieth century that are classified as *cumulative* (strophic songs in which a line of lyric is added to each subsequent strophe) or *enumerative* (cumulative strophic songs with a counting element in the lyrics).[11] A simple example of a cumulative song is "The

[8] Summach (2011, 15) also notes a "lull in activity" during this section in which "subdued instrumentation" also serves to build expectation, which is fulfilled once the "active texture of sr is repeated in c, along with the opening harmonic progression."

[9] Malawey's study also references earlier work on modified strophic songs, which includes J. H. Thomas's 1973 study of Schubert's explorations of this form, particularly in *Schwanengesang*.

[10] There are many examples of music-theoretical explorations of developing variation including but not limited to studies of Brahms (Frisch 1984) and more recent publications on Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (Snyder 2025), German Lied (Krebs 2025), and modern jazz (Baker 2025).

[11] Sharp (1919, vi) also lists "Accumulative" as a category of songs that have cumulative strophic form. My use of the terms cumulative and accumulative in this study differs from Spicer (2004) and from Burkholder (1995a, 1995b). Spicer's study shows the way themes from previous song sections accumulate and layer in a final cumulative section. Burkholder's definition of "cumulative form" arises in his study of Ives's music and other late nineteenth-century pieces. His cumulative form features a reverse of the typical the-

Opening lines	Here's good luck to the **pint pot** / Good luck to the barley mow Jolly good luck to the pint pot / Good luck to the barley mow
Repeating lines	The **pint pot** half a pint gill pot half a gill quarter gill nipperkin and the brown bowl
Refrain	Here's good luck, good luck to the barley mow

Example 5. "The Barley Mow," three-part cumulative strophic form structure for Verse 1.

Opening line	On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me
Repeating lines	Six geese a-laying Five gold(en) rings Four calling birds Three French hens Two turtle doves
Refrain	And a partridge in a pear tree

Example 6. "The Twelve Days of Christmas," three-part enumerative strophic form structure for Verse 6.

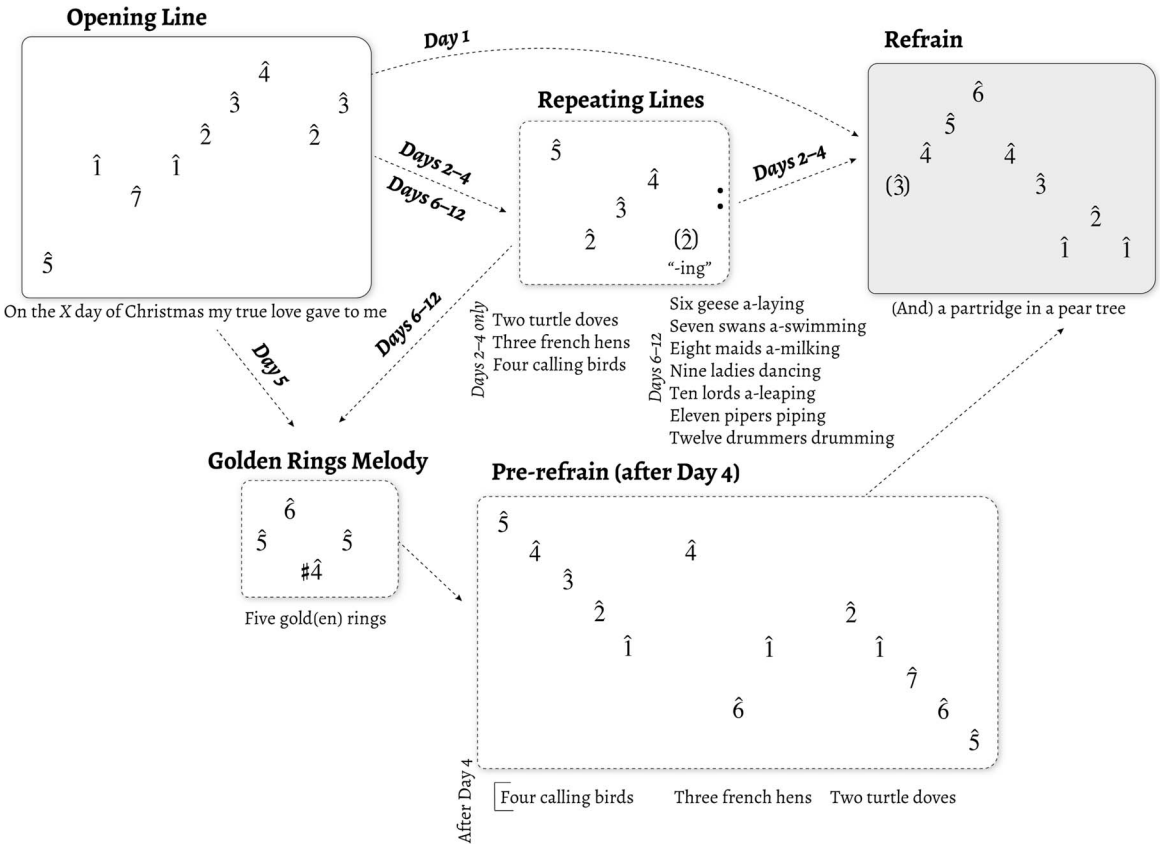
Barley Mow" (Roud, index number 944), a traditional drinking song from the British Isles that gradually adds lyrics as the song progresses.[12] The number of verses in the song can vary depending on the singer's desire, and the song is occasionally sung alternating between the soloist and a group (typically fellow drinkers). The first verse (Example 5) begins with several predetermined repeating lines; the singer adds a "pint pot" (in boldface) to the list of drinking vessels and progresses through the rest, ending with the refrain. In each subsequent verse, further items are added, sometimes progressing beyond vessels to wish good luck to the landlord, the bookie, and other figures, accumulating repeating lines until the song concludes.

Enumerative songs differ from cumulative songs only in that the verses accumulate numerically as well as lyrically. "The Twelve Days of Christmas" (Roud, index number 68) is often cited as a prototypical example of an enumerative cumulative song. In terms of its lyrical structure, this is absolutely the case. Each verse progresses through a three-part lyrical organization (Example 6) consisting of a single opening line, a specific number of repeating lines corresponding to the number of days of Christmas, and a refrain that references the gift given on the first day of Christmas: "(And) a partridge in a pear tree."

Melodically, however, the song is not as simple as the lyrics suggest. When the fifth day adds the melody for "Five gold(en) rings," this triggers a change of melody for the "Four calling birds," "Three French hens," and "Two turtle doves" melodies that is retained for the remainder of the song. Example 7 maps out the melodic trajectory for the whole song; Video Example 2 tracks the path of the verse for the eighth day of Christmas through this trajectory. As the video illustrates, the verse begins with the opening line and progresses through the repeating line three times (to get from days eight to six). The melody then proceeds through what I've called the "Golden Rings Melody," which is introduced on the fifth day and triggers a new melody for the countdown of the gifts for days four, three, and two. When

matic order where a main theme is stated at the beginning. Instead, as Spicer (2004, 29) summarizes, "thematic fragments are gradually introduced and developed, only to crystallize into a full-fledged presentation of the main theme in a climactic pay-off at the end of the piece."

[12] The Roud Folk Song Index is a database of over 240,000 traditional English language songs, compiled and maintained by Steve Roud. For more on "The Barley Mow," the recording used in Example 5, and its inclusion in the Roud Folk Song Index, see "Barley Mow," *English Folk Dance & Song Society*, accessed February 13, 2026, https://www.efdss.org/?view=article&id=2540:efdss-resource-bank-chorus-barley-mow&catid=55&highlight=WyJjdW11bGF0aXZlIiwic29uZ3MiXQ==. The lyrics of Example 5 follow their transcription, the melody of which shows a repeating tonic pitch for the repeating lines with a stepwise descent to the dominant for the text "and the brown bowl" at the end of the repeating lines.



Example 7. "The Twelve Days of Christmas," enumerative strophic form melodic mapping.

Video Example 2. "The Twelve Days of Christmas," eighth day of Christmas trajectory.

we first heard days two, three, and four, they were set to the repeating line. But from the sixth day onward, they are instead set to what I call the *pre-refrain* content, which is no longer repeating. This is a surprisingly complicated structure for what could have been a simple enumerative version of a cumulative song form.

Many other examples of cumulative form arise in folk songs; they are listed in popular folk song sources like Cecil Sharp's (1919) collection, *English Folk Songs*, among others.[13] Indeed, it is associated so strongly with folk sources that when cumulative form arises in Gilbert and Sullivan's "I Have a Song to Sing, O!" from *Yeoman of the Guard* (1888), it acts almost like a folk topic.[14] It follows, then, that the song appears on the Peter, Paul and Mary album, *Peter, Paul and Mommy* (1969), fitting seamlessly into their folk style.[15]

2.2 Pete Seeger's Cumulative Children's Songs

Mid-century folk singer Pete Seeger released several cumulative songs on his albums for children in the 1950s and 1960s. His version of "I Had a Rooster" (from *Birds,*

[13] Karpeles (1974), a well-known folk song source, includes 12 songs under the category of "Cumulative and Enumerative Songs." "Beginners' Guides: English Folk Song – Types of Folk Song" (2025) lists three cumulative songs: "The Tree in the Wood" (Roud, 129), "The Barley Mow" (Roud, 944), and "The Twelve Days of Christmas" (Roud, 68). Research on this topic is sparse but includes studies like Brown (2014), which compares Senegalese versions of cumulative songs with English counterparts, and Smith (2000), who cites cumulative songs (like "Green Grass Grew All Around" and "There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly") as good models for teaching literacy to children. In my research for this article, I also encountered other Christmas songs that are cumulative (e.g., "Must Be Santa") and many examples of cumulative songs in other languages, including the German song "Drunten in der grünen Au," which is very similar to Seeger's "Green Grass Grows All Around." Thanks to Barbara Dietlinger for pointing out the use of cumulative form in German folk songs.

[14] Thanks to John Y. Lawrence for bringing this example to my attention.

[15] Peter, Paul and Mary's version of "I Have a Song to Sing, O!" is identical to the Gilbert and Sullivan source and both are straightforward cumulative songs like Seeger's, so I have not included a detailed analysis here.

Opening lines	I had a rooster, and the rooster pleased me I fed my rooster on a greenberry tree
Refrain	The little rooster went cock-a-doodle doo Dee doodle-dee doodle-dee doodle-dee do

Example 8. *Pete Seeger, "I Had a Rooster," Verse 1 lyrics.*

Opening lines	I had a baby, and the baby pleased me Fed my baby on a greenberry tree
Repeating lines	The little baby went ***waaaa, waaaa*** The little lion went ***roar, roar*** The little cow went ***mooo, mooo*** The little pig went ***oink, oink, oink*** The little duck went ***quack, quack, quack*** The little cat went ***meow, meow***
Refrain	The little rooster went cock-a-doodle doo Dee doodle-dee doodle-dee doodle-dee do

Example 9. *Seeger, "I Had a Rooster," three-part structure for Verse 7 (comedic impressions noted in italics).*

Beasts, Bugs and Little Fishes, 1955), typifies the use of this flexible form for humorous purposes. Seeger showcases a three-part structure with accumulating repeating lines and includes comedic impressions of animal sounds within those repeating lines. The first verse (Example 8) leaves out the repeating lines and the impressions therein—the rooster sings during the refrain, playing a musical role rather than an impression. Seeger saves his first animal impression for the second verse so that by Verse 7 (Example 9) he is mimicking five animals and a baby, with timing flexibility arising in his performance as he delivers the imitations.

All the examples I could find where Seeger uses cumulative form are in songs for children, but not all of these are as humorous as "I Had a Rooster." His version of "Green Grass Grows All Around" (*Sleep-Time: Songs & Stories*, 1958) is a less comedic example that focuses on accumulating descriptors of a nature scene, without a clear intention to make his audiences laugh. His first verse (Example 10) establishes the three-part structure for his strophes, with accumulation creating drama that culminates in the eleventh

Opening lines	Oh in the woods there was a tree The prettiest little tree that you ever did see
Repeating lines	Now the tree was in the hole And the hole was in the ground
Refrain	And the green grass grew all around, all around And the green grass grew all around

Example 10. *Seeger, "Green Grass Grows All Around," three-part structure for Verse 1.*

	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4	Verse 5	Verse 6	Verse 7	Verse 8	Verse 9	Verse 10	Verse 11
Opening lines	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2
Repeating lines	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2
	Refrain	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
		Refrain	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
			Refrain	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
				Refrain	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
					Refrain	7	7	7	7	7	7
						Refrain	8	8	8	8	8
							Refrain	9	9	9	9
								Refrain	10	10	10
									Refrain	11	11
										Refrain	12
											Refrain

Example 11. *Seeger, "Green Grass Grows All Around," three-part structure for all eleven verses.*

verse, which cycles through the repeating line twelve times (Example 11). Comparing this final verse with the first illustrates that the final verse is significantly longer than it was at the beginning of the song after gradually accumulating repeating lines in each verse.

The goal of cumulative and enumerative songs is adding a single line each verse as part of a specific type of storytelling in song. Some examples are drinking songs, challenging an increasingly inebriated singer to remember all the accumulating lyrics; some examples are designed to teach kids about animals in a delightfully silly way. While strophic form itself is simple, the cumulative technique of gradually adding new lyrics with each repetition provides a slight challenge, adding a level of play and interest to otherwise straightforward song components.

3.1 Freewheeling Strophic Form in 1960s Singer-Songwriter Songs

One of the hallmark features of 1960s singer-songwriter music was its connections to precedents in earlier traditions. Seeger's own career began in the 1940s with the emergence of the folk revival period that peaked in the mid-1960s. The 1960s singer-songwriters found inspiration in earlier sources, initially offering cover versions of existing blues songs and ballads and then eventually contributing original compositions to the folk canon.[16] Given this focus on traditional sources, and the general positioning of artists like Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie as central figures in the folk songwriting canon, it seems reasonable to assume that singers like Bob Dylan would have encountered Seeger's songs for children and the cumulative strophic forms some of them employed.[17]

Dylan's original 1960s songwriting drew on the tradition set by Seeger to use simple song structures and communal topics to reach his audiences.[18] Dylan wrote topical songs, referencing specific events, and general lyrical themes that reflected public sentiment in the 1960s. He used the pared-down texture of voice and guitar (occasionally adding harmonica) to highlight the lyrics that were of personal and political significance to his listeners. Using strophic form for his songs offered the option to keep the form simple to highlight the meaning of his lyrics.

That freewheeling strophic form arises in some of Dylan's topical protest songs is no surprise, given his tendency to add improvisatory qualities to songs that disrupted expected formal and metric structures.[19] As I explore in other research on singer-songwriter music (Murphy 2023), Dylan's influence permeated the flexible performance practice of 1960s protest songs and 1970s confessional songwriting. Three of Dylan's five freewheeling strophic songs can be categorized as topical protest songs, referencing specific cultural events.[20] In "Only a Pawn," his lyrics reference an important event in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement: the 1963 murder of NAACP leader and civil rights activist Medgar Evers. Dylan offers a unique perspective in his lyrics that differs from that of his 1960s songwriting contemporaries.[21] Rather than focusing on Evers as the victim of violence, as his musical peers do, Dylan's lyrics explore the broader sociopolitical structure in which Evers's murderer (the "poor white man," Byron De La Beckwith, whose name is not mentioned in the lyrics) was taught by broader systems of power to focus on racism and acts of racial violence rather than his own "poor" standing in society.[22]

Dylan's first verse (Example 12) initiates this lyrical perspective and offers the template for his freewheeling strophic structure. The three opening lines set the stage for Evers's murder. The repeating lines then shorten the phrase lengths to two bars while describing the shooter's eyes and then plainly stating "he can't be blamed."[23] The

[16] Christa Bentley (2016, 417) proposes that singer-songwriters grew out of the folk revival as they explored ways to make original contributions to the folk music canon. Murphy (2023, 74–101) explores the rise of topical songwriting and the individual styles of Dylan, Simon, and Sainte-Marie.

[17] There's evidence to suggest that Dylan was on the lookout for ways to add irregularities to his performances. Rings (2013, 24) recounts the singer's use of a Guthrie songbook, *From California to the New York Island*, that had an introduction by Seeger advocating for "irregularity" in strophic song performances. For more on techniques of such irregularities, see Murphy (2024–25).

[18] Bentley (2016, 48) suggests that Seeger's penchant for group singing resulted in simple songs; his communal songwriting created a "class solidarity" that was "essential to the labor movement."

[19] Murphy (2024–25) explores how performed-out fermatas add interest to Dylan's strophic song performances, disrupting metric and hypermetric structures.

[20] As explored below, the remaining two songs— "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and "Mr. Tambourine Man"—have more general themes. Dylan disliked the term "protest songs" and refuted his status as a protest singer, instead preferring to refer to himself as a composer of "contemporary songs" (Scorsese 2005).

[21] Murphy (2023, 87) lists several other 1960s songs written on the topic of Evers's murder including Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" (1964) and two songs by Phil Ochs: "Love Me, I'm a Liberal" (1966) and "Too Many Martyrs" (also titled "The Ballad of Medgar Evers") (1964).

[22] Todd Harvey (2001, 82) describes this perspective in "Only a Pawn" as support for the common man "even excusing a racist because he is a hapless pawn" and focusing instead on the corrupt officials who encourage acts of racial violence.

[23] In Murphy (2023, 87–99) I explore the varying phrase structure lengths of Dylan's opening verse, which begins with a five-bar opening line and vary due to Dylan's expressive timing.

Opening lines	A bullet from the back of a bush took Medgar Evers' blood A finger fired the trigger to his name A handle hid out in the dark A hand set the spark
Repeating lines	Two eyes took the aim Behind a man's brain But he can't be blamed
Refrain	He's only a pawn in their game

Example 12. Dylan, "Only a Pawn," three-part structure for Verse 1.

Video Example 3. Dylan, "Only a Pawn in Their Game," Verse 1.

	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4	Verse 5
Opening lines	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Repeating lines	1 2 3	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4
Refrain	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Refrain**

Example 13. Dylan, "Only a Pawn," three-part structure for all verses.

refrain lengthens the phrase back to four bars and offers Dylan's perspective: De La Beckwith murdered Evers and did so by societal design. In Dylan's telling of the story, De La Beckwith, a white man, held little upward social mobility because of his poverty. Instead of directing anger towards the politicians who did nothing to improve his poor sociopolitical standing, their rhetoric baited him to transform that anger into racism. As historian Sean Wilentz (2013) summarizes for *NPR*, in Dylan's account the "poor white man's at the caboose of the train, but it's the system—the rich, the powerful, everyone from the cops on up and down—they're the ones who are twisting this guy's head around with racism in order to keep him down."[24] Video Example 3 shows how Dylan navigates the melodic and harmonic trajectory of Verse 1, with shortened phrases in the repeating lines. As the video demonstrates, the musical scaffolding is retained in the repeating line while Dylan sings through different lines of his lyrics. There is narrative momentum but no motion through the form.

The repeating lines section of the freewheeling strophic form of "Only a Pawn" creates an engaging method of storytelling through its unpredictable structure that stretches and reduces the number of repeated lines in each verse. Example 13 (which reproduces Example 3) illustrates Dylan's freewheeling form that begins with three repeating lines, then seven, eight, six, and finally four.[25]

[24] For more on "Only a Pawn" and its historical context, see "Bob Dylan's Tribute to Medgar Evers Took On the Big Picture," *NPR*, accessed July 3, 2026, https://www.npr.org/2013/06/12/190743651/bob-dylans-tribute-to-medgar-evers-took-on-the-big-picture.

[25] I also notice similarities in formal structure across several live performances of "Only a Pawn," discussed in Murphy (2023, 19–20). There I reference a July 6, 1963 performance at Silas Magee's Farm (Pennebaker 2011), a July 26 performance at the Newport Folk Festival (Lerner 2007), Dylan's July 30 recording for the *Songs of Freedom* television program (Dylan 2013), and his August 28 performance at

Opening lines	Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son? And where have you been, my darling young one?
Repeating lines	I've stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains I've walked and I've crawled on six crooked highways I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests I've been out in front of a dozen dead oceans I've been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard
Refrain	And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

Example 14. Dylan, "Hard Rain," three-part structure for Verse 1.

Video Example 4. Dylan, "Hard Rain," Verse 1 trajectory.

The structure is unpredictable in a way that differs from the cumulative and enumerative songs of the previous section. Rather than gradually lengthening his verses one line at a time, Dylan cycles through as many repeating lines as necessary to tell a part of his story in each verse. The version of strophic form that results is not cumulative like Seeger's examples that grow with each verse iteration, it is freewheeling, expanding and contracting as Dylan's narrative unfolds.

Though I've begun this study with "Only a Pawn," it is not the first instance of freewheeling strophic song in Dylan's output—"A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" (1963) predates it and provides a possible origin for this form. The structure of the "Hard Rain" lyrics is based on the Child Ballad (No. 12) "Lord Randal," which begins with a few questions followed by a series of answers.[26]

Rings (2025, 239) maps a three-part structure of "Questions–Answers–Refrain" onto Dylan's verses in "Hard Rain." Rings proposes that the middle "Answers" section arose as the musical solution to complexities in Dylan's initial lyrical poetry (written in 1962). The poetry's "Answers" phrases created "visual bulges, causing each verse to swell vertically as the surreal images pile up, one on top of another" (243). Rings also explains the musical response.

> Dylan's solution—to devise a rotating melodic and harmonic figure that he could repeat as much as necessary in a given verse—was one of his novel formal strategies as a songwriter. He may say he never invents his own melodies, but this technique, which I will call the "iterative core," is an exception, an invention borne of necessity. It was a musical response to lyrical pressure, specifically in those songs that fall into "chains of flashing images" or otherwise drop into lists that can expand and contract, accordion-style. (243)

In other words, the repeating lines that are a feature of freewheeling strophic form may have arisen out of musical needs to set the lyrical ideas for "Hard Rain."

Dylan's opening lines to the song (Example 14) correspond with the verse's "Questions" and the repeating lines are his "Answers." Example 15 shows the mapping of Dylan's repeating lines, where he often pauses to expand the final notated measure to multiple bars. Video Example 4 maps the trajectory of repeating lines and refrain in Dylan's first verse. In "Only a Pawn" we saw a shortening of the phrase unit lengths for the repeating lines; Dylan keeps longer units for his repeating lines in "Hard Rain" that each span four strong beats in the opening lines and repeating lines.[27]

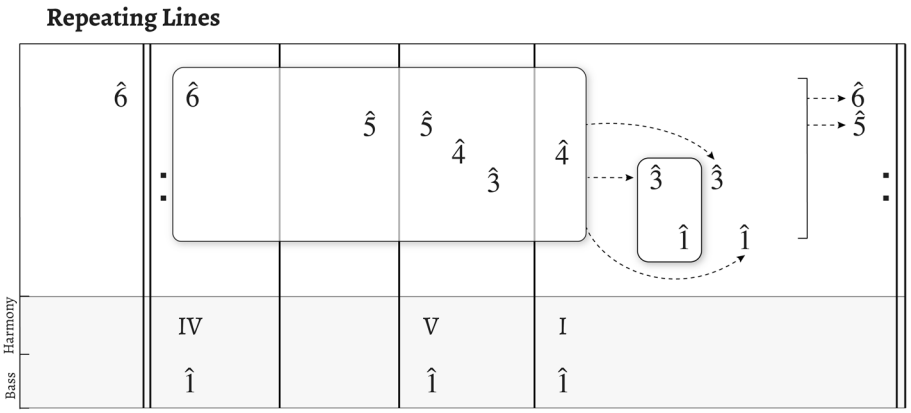
Comparing the five verses of "Hard Rain" (Example 16), Dylan's verse lengths peak in the final verse, with twelve iterations of his repeating line. His freewheeling strophic form allows for the expansion and contraction of the middle of his three-part form, culminating in the longest "chain of flashing images" in the song.

Unlike "Only a Pawn," which references a specific event, the lyrics of "Hard Rain" broadly comment on suffering and injustice, both personal and environmental, that are associated with the cultural feelings around the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, even though the

the March on Washington as four performances that present identical lyrical and formal flexibility to his 1964 studio recording.

[26] Rings (2025, 231–249) devotes a chapter to the musical sources of "Hard Rain," comparing Dylan's melody and prosodic structure to possible precedents in folk-revival versions.

[27] The precise structure of Dylan's hypermeter in "Hard Rain" is illustrated in Rings (2025, 257) who shows the irregular 3+4 hypermetric organization for the opening and repeating lines. (He interprets the refrain as shifting to a 4+4 organization.) The mapping in Example 14 illustrates that Dylan's repeating lines span four downbeats, the fourth of which corresponds to a hyperdownbeat in Rings's interpretation.



Example 15. Dylan, "Hard Rain," repeating line mapping.

	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4	Verse 5
Opening lines	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2
Repeating lines	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	Refrain	6 7	6 7	6	6 7
		Refrain	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	8 9 10 11 12
					Refrain

Example 16. Dylan, "Hard Rain," three-part structure for all verses.

song was written before the events of the crisis occurred (Scorsese 2005). Dylan (2004, 85) himself describes "Hard Rain" as "one long funeral song" for humanity. The song has an improvisatory quality resulting from the freewheeling strophic form. The varying size of Dylan's verses, due to the changing number of repeating lines, matches the in-the-moment qualities of his lyrics.

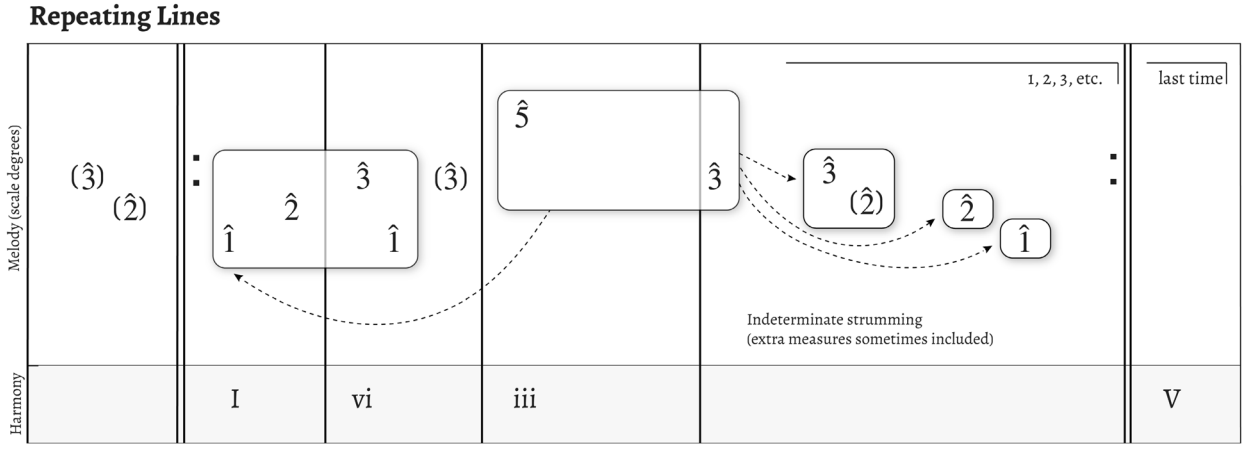
The final prototypical example of freewheeling strophic form in Dylan's repertoire returns to his style of topical protest songwriting. In "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" (1964), Dylan's lyrics make use of the personal pronouns "you" and "your" (rather than the third person "he" and "their" from "Only a Pawn") to renounce the racist inequalities evident in the justice system.[28] The lyrics dramatize the death of Hattie Carroll, a 51-year-old Black server who was killed by 24-year-old William Zantzinger, the white son of her employer, after he attacked her with his cane. This song is Dylan's response to the event after reading a newspaper article about Zantzinger's murderous actions and subsequent light sentencing.[29] He paints Zantzinger as a drunken, aggressive son of well-connected rich parents, whose wealth and social positioning benefitted their son. In Dylan's tale, the parents used their resources to manipulate the trial judge to hand out a

[28] Harvey (2001, 63) says the song "reaches beyond a simple recitation of the facts, instead invoking a broader issue." Though Carroll's race is not mentioned in the lyrics, Harvey argues that her race is clear from the lyrics and Dylan "implies that had their positions been reversed (Carroll beating Zantzinger) the sentence would have been more severe."

[29] Throughout the lyrics, Dylan misspells his name as Zanzinger.

Opening lines	William Zanzinger killed poor Hattie Carroll With a cane that he twirled around his diamond ring finger
Repeating lines	At a Baltimore hotel society gath'rin' And the cops was called in and his weapon took from him As they rode him in custody down to the station And booked William Zanzinger for first-degree murder
Refrain	But you who philosophize disgrace and critize all fears Take the rag away from your face / Now ain't the time for your tears

Example 17. Dylan, "Hattie Carroll," three-part structure for Verse 1.



Example 18. Dylan, "Hattie Carroll," repeating line mapping.

shockingly short six-month sentence for the murder. The narrative here echoes that of "Only a Pawn" in framing racial violence within larger systems of oppressive white supremacy.[30]

Dylan's verses (e.g., Verse 1, Example 17) follow the three-part structure of freewheeling strophic form, with two opening lines, repeating lines, and a two-line refrain. As the mapping of the repeating lines (Example 18) demonstrates, Dylan's phrase units are around four bars in length, though some indeterminate strumming results in longer phrase units in some cases. Like "Hard Rain," the repeating lines in "Hattie Carroll" are not shorter than the surrounding phrase units, but they still offer the sense of suspended formal progress associated with the repeating lines of freewheeling strophic form.

Comparing the song's verses (Example 19) shows more of a cumulative structure—with four repetitions increasing to five in Verse 2, then nine in Verse 3 and finally eleven in

	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4
Opening lines	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2
Repeating lines	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
	Refrain	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Refrain**

Example 19. Dylan, "Hattie Carroll," three-part structure for Verses 1–3, with a two-part structure for Verse 4.

Verse 4—than Dylan's other freewheeling strophic forms. Verse 4, then, has the most repeating lines and features a change in the typical three-part format. Dylan removes the opening lines which results in a two-part structure (Example 20) that begins with the repeating lines and ends with

[30] Monk (2021) finds Dylan's clearer stance against Zantzinger in "Hattie Carroll" to be an improvement over his more neutral tone in "Only a Pawn;" he allows listeners to be outraged by Carroll's murder and the subsequent light sentence handed out to Zantzinger.

Repeating lines	In the courtroom of honor, the judge pounded his gavel To show that all's equal and that the courts are on the level And that the strings in the books ain't pulled and persuaded And that even the nobles get properly handled Once that the cops have chased after and caught 'em And that the ladder of law has no top and no bottom Stared at the person who killed for no reason Who just happened to be feeling that way without warning And he spoke through his cloak most deep and distinguished And handed out strongly, for penalty and repentance William Zanzinger with a six-month sentence
Refrain	Oh, but you who philosophize disgrace and critize all fears Bury the rag deep in your face / For now's the time for your tears

Example 20. Dylan, "Hattie Carroll," two-part structure for Verse 4.

Video Example 5. Dylan, "Hattie Carroll," Verse 4 trajectory.

the final refrain. In this final verse, he changes the refrain lyrics slightly. Instead of ending "Take the rag away from your face / Now ain't the time for your tears," Dylan intensifies the last statement: "Bury the rag deep in your face / For now's the time for your tears."

It's critical that Dylan differentiate this final verse somehow, since it is where the sentencing occurs. There's an irony to this choice as well, since the number of repeating lines in the verse far exceeds the number of months of Zantzinger's sentence. Further, Dylan also uses the rhetorical device of anaphora, repeating the same words at the beginning of multiple phrases to increase the emotional impact of his lyrics.[31] In Verse 4 (Example 20 and Video Example 5) Dylan begins his third, fourth, and sixth repeated lines with "And that," interrupted in the fifth line by "Once that," a variation on the anaphora word pair, and followed later by lines beginning with a truncated "And." These repetitions build suspense toward the final line that reveals to listeners that Zantzinger received a mere six-month sentence for committing murder. This casts Dylan's previous lyrics such as "nobles get properly handled" as sarcasm. All's not, in fact, "equal."

Like "Only a Pawn," "Hattie Carroll" shows a correlation between Dylan's topical protest songwriting and use of freewheeling strophic form. This is made even more evident by the chronological alignment of the two within Dylan's songwriting canon: Harvey (2001, 64) positions "Hattie Carroll" at the apex of Dylan's topical protest songwriting; after this, Dylan rarely based his song lyrics on current events. (The song is also the second-to-last iteration of freewheeling form in Dylan's repertoire; the last is "Mr. Tambourine Man," which does not have protest lyrics and uses a verse-chorus freewheeling variant.) The three songs in this section ("Only a Pawn," "Hard Rain," and "Hattie Carroll") suggest that freewheeling strophic form may have been a preference for Dylan to set his lyrics on themes of import to his 1960s audiences.

3.2 Paul Simon's Experimentation with Freewheeling Strophic Form

Within the aesthetic environment of the mid-1960s singer-songwriter style, Paul Simon found fertile ground for nurturing his songwriting talent during a break from his duo work with Art Garfunkel.[32] Simon took advantage of the "urban folk" sound of the 1960s alongside the opportunities for musical and lyrical trends to complement his songwriting ideas, particularly the possibilities for expanding the "literary potential" of his lyrical craft (Bennighof 2007, xxi).[33]

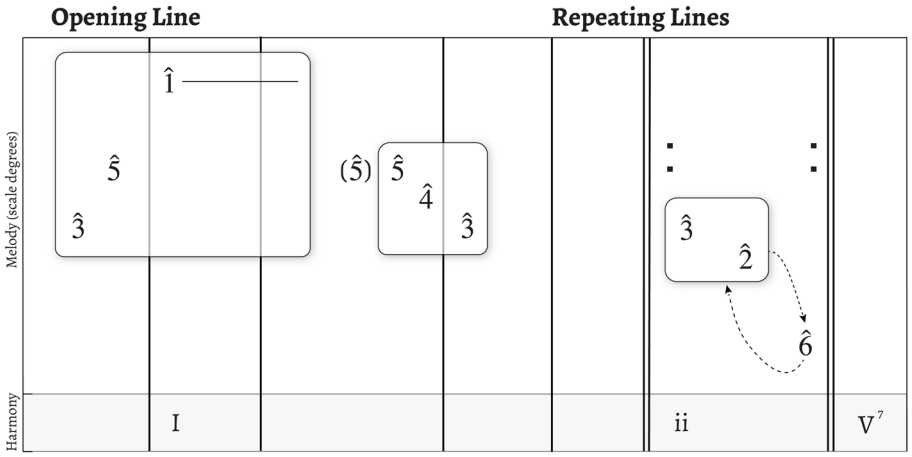
[31] Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer of this article who pointed out the use of anaphora in the lyrics for "Hattie Carroll." Rings (2025, 244) also notes repetitions elsewhere, pointing out Dylan's use of the word "table" arising multiple times in the third verse to emphasize the "dreary litany of tasks" that is then "suddenly interrupted by an account of Carroll's murder."

[32] Simon & Garfunkel released their debut, *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.*, in 1964 to limited success. Murphy (2023, 12 n28) recounts that the album only found success after an overdubbed "folk rock" version of their song "The Sound of Silence" was released without their knowledge in 1965, while Simon was in England. For more on the history of this song and its impact on Simon & Garfunkel's success, see Stephan-Robinson (2009, 4).

[33] Simon's studies in English literature were reportedly a major influence on his songwriting. For more on Simon's influences, lit-

Opening line	He was a most peculiar man
Repeating lines	That's what Mrs. Riordan says, and she should know
Pre-Refrain	She lived upstairs from him
Refrain	She said he was a most peculiar man

Example 21. Paul Simon, "A Most Peculiar Man," modified freewheeling strophic form structure for Verse 1.



Example 22. Simon, "A Most Peculiar Man," opening line and repeating line mapping.

The form of Simon's song "A Most Peculiar Man" is evidence of his awareness of songwriting trends stemming from Dylan.[34] The solo version of this song was released on *The Paul Simon Songbook* (1965) followed by a duet version with Garfunkel on their 1966 album *Sounds of Silence*. Simon wrote the song as a response to a two-line obituary he saw in a newspaper while living in London in the mid-1960s (Bennighof 2007, 17). While the first verse's lyrics introduce the man, the second and third verses illustrate the insular nature of his existence ("all alone"), social dynamics ("he wasn't like them"), and tendency to keep to himself ("he seldom spoke").

Simon begins his first verse (Example 21) with a modified version of the three-part structure of freewheeling strophic form. First, he includes a single four-bar opening line, which contrasts the two or three opening lines of the Dylan examples above. Second, Simon creates three repeating melodic lines out of one lyrical line ("That's what Mrs. Riordon says, and she should know"), creating additional disorientation in ignoring his own line breaks.[35] Third, Simon includes an added pre-refrain line that moves melodically upward to $\hat{5}$ (seen later in Video Example 6) and sets up the melodic descent of the refrain line.

Simon's version of freewheeling strophic form also features a much shorter phrase unit for the repeating line: here it is set to a single bar (shown in Example 22) rotating quickly through the $\hat{3}$–$\hat{2}$ melody (with occasional dips to the submediant) before releasing to dominant harmony and proceeding through the rest of the verse. This shorter unit contrasts the surrounding four-bar phrases, causing Simon's repeating lines to feel intensely tight and contained, mirroring the insularity of the "most peculiar man."

Like Dylan's freewheeling strophic structure for "Hattie Carroll," Simon's increases the number of repeating lines over the course of the song (Example 23), but not in the systematic manner of a true cumulative song. His second and third verses have four repeating lines, increasing by one in comparison to the first, and his final verse doubles in length.

erary and musical, see Bennighof (2007) and Stephan-Robinson (2009).

[34] Scholars like Craig Russell (1997, 595) credit the influence of folk revivalists, particularly "Bob Dylan's poetic invention and social commentary," with a shift in Simon's songwriting from "bouncy pop music" of his early songs to covering the "troubling events of the civil rights movement." Simon's parody song "A Simple Desultory Philippic (or How I Was Lyndon Johnson'd into Submission)" imitates Dylan's early style, featuring a "rapid-fire succession of ultra-short rhyming phrases" (Brackett 1995, 166).

[35] This is how it is formatted on Simon's official website: "Songs & Lyrics: A Most Peculiar Man," accessed July 6, 2026, https://www.paulsimon.com/song/most-peculiar-man/.

	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4
Opening lines	1	1	1	1
Repeating lines	1 2 3	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Pre-Refrain	**Pre-Refrain**	**Pre-Refrain**	**Pre-Refrain**	**Pre-Refrain**
Refrain	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Extra Line**
				Refrain

Example 23. Simon, "A Most Peculiar Man," modified freewheeling strophic form verse comparisons.

Opening line	He died last Saturday
Repeating lines	He turned on the gas and he went to sleep With the windows closed so he'd never wake up To his silent world and his tiny room And Mrs. Riordan says he has a brother somewhere
Pre-Refrain	Who should be notified soon
Extra Line	And all the people said, "What a shame that he's dead.
Refrain	But wasn't he A Most Peculiar Man?"

Example 24. Simon, "A Most Peculiar Man," Verse 4 structure with an extra line added before the refrain.[36]

Verse 4 (Example 24) also has a peculiar structure that echoes the peculiarity of the song's subject. Like the previous verses, Simon continues to ignore his own line breaks with the placement of his descending $\hat{3}$–$\hat{2}$ melody as he describes the death. The character's suicide is an upsetting event, to be sure, but one that is rather methodical and undramatic, a slow drift into endless sleep.[37] The pre-refrain occurs as expected, but then Simon adds an extra line ("And all the people said, 'What a shame that he's dead'") before the final refrain. He "wasn't like them," his isolation and peculiarity means the death is viewed as a "shame" rather than a tragedy. This extra material helps reinforce the reaction to his death, highlighting the apparent apathy from his neighbors whose inaction may have contributed to the outcome. Video Example 6 traces Simon's melody through these modifications to his form; here there's a discernable contrast between the motion/stasis of the repeating lines and their eventual release to the content of the pre-refrain, extra line, and refrain.

Video Example 6. Simon, "A Most Peculiar Man," Verse 4 trajectory.

Simon's use of freewheeling strophic form for "A Most Peculiar Man" shows his awareness of Dylan's topical songwriting, both in content (responding to a specific obituary in the newspaper and commenting on human behavior) and flexibility of form. The changes he made illustrate Simon's own artistic voice as a songwriter, exploring musical formats alongside his craft of lyric writing.

[36] Simon's melodic setting breaks up the syntax of his lyrical lines, resulting in shorter fragments like "He turned on the gas," "and he went to sleep," "with the windows closed," "so he'd never wake up," etc.

[37] Many thanks to a reviewer of this article for their suggestion about viewing Simon's lyrics reflecting the methodical and mundane nature of the man's suicide.

4. Verse–Chorus Variants of Freewheeling Strophic Form

All four preceding examples explore the way that Bob Dylan and Paul Simon set their songs to a freewheeling strophic form structure rather than a typical strophic form with repeating strophes of identical length. Two Dylan songs also map features of freewheeling strophic form onto a verse–chorus structure: "Who Killed Davey Moore?" (written in 1963) and "Mr. Tambourine Man" (released in 1965). In these, the verses contain the repeating line structure, and the choruses act as opening line and/or refrain sections.

Dylan's song "Who Killed Davey Moore?" was written in 1963 but never released on a studio album.[38] I'll be exploring the 1964 Philharmonic Hall recording that was included on the 2004 album *The Bootleg Series Vol. 6: Bob Dylan Live 1964, Concert at Philharmonic Hall*. The lyrics present Dylan's take on the death of Davey Moore, a boxer who was knocked out in a fight with Sugar Ramos in 1963 and died after being in a coma (Harvey 2001, 120). Written several days after Moore's death, Dylan's topical song offers commentary on the people involved in the boxing event, none of whom accepted responsibility for Moore's death.[39]

Not being in strophic form, the formal structure for "Davey Moore" differs from that of the preceding examples of freewheeling strophic form. Dylan's chorus functions as the opening lines, echoing the structure and function of the "Questions" in Rings's three-part structure for "Hard Rain." In the first verse (Example 25) the repeating lines recount how the referee thinks he should not be blamed for Moore's death. The number of repeating lines is harder to parse here than other songs, since the melody is a reciting tone on the tonic (shown on the right side of Example 26), so for this study I'm counting Dylan's lyrical lines and repetitive bassline instead of pathways through a repeating melody.[40] Each verse ends with the refrain "No, you can't blame me at all" that is repeated with identical melodic and harmonic structure at the end of each verse. Since the lyrics "It wasn't me that made him fall / No, you can't blame me at all" (or a close variant) occur each verse, I've italicized both lines, with the former set to the repeating line melody and the latter to its own refrain melody. Video Example 7 traces Dylan's path through the first verse.

Chorus	Who killed Davey Moore? Why and what's the reason for?
Repeating Lines	"Not I," says the referee "Don't point your finger at me I could've stopped it in the eighth And maybe kept him from his fate But the crowd would've booed, I'm sure At not getting their money's worth It's too bad that he had to go But there was pressure on me too, you know *It wasn't me that made him fall*
Refrain	*No, you can't blame me at all"*

Example 25. Dylan, "Who Killed Davey Moore?," structure for Verse 1.

Video Example 7. Dylan, "Who Killed Davey Moore," Verse 1 trajectory.

"Davey Moore" shows a modification of freewheeling strophic form to a verse–chorus variant. Example 27 compares the verses of "Davey Moore," plotting the initial chorus in an opening line position, since it is the first thing we hear in the song. But after this verse, Dylan's performance places the chorus immediately after each refrain and follows it with a pause before the next verse, suggesting the chorus is a post-refrain event. The repeated lines themselves are reduced to two bars within the verses, shorter than the surrounding unit lengths. The freewheeling nature of the song's structure becomes more evident when comparing the verses. Verse 1 has the most repeating lines at nine. The song then adopts a decremental rather than cumulative process, with the number of repeating lines decreasing to eight in Verse 2 and seven in Verses 3–5. The song ends up with a predictable outcome in its three-part structure, decreasing by the same amount across the repeating lines sections and then eventually settling on seven repetitions rather than continuing to vary.

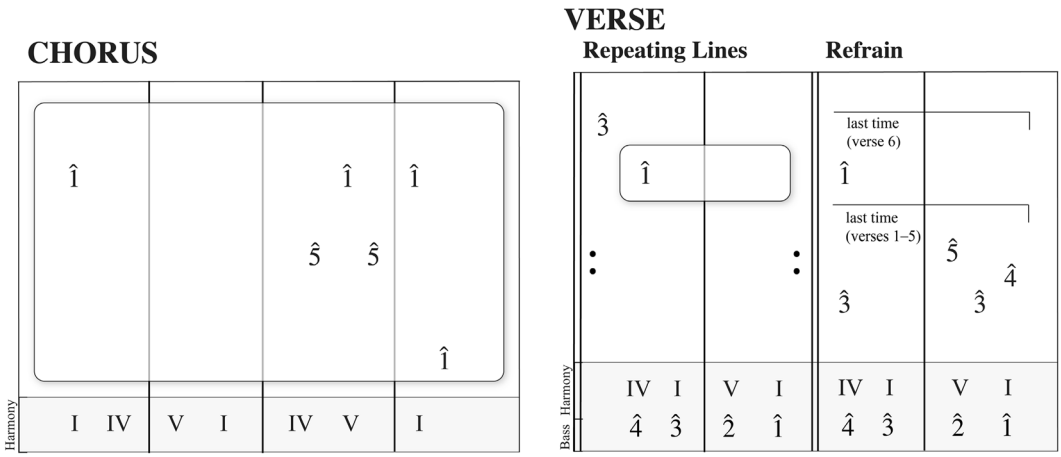
Formally, Dylan's song "Mr. Tambourine Man" takes the verse-chorus variant one step further, offering two three-part structures within each of his freewheeling verses. There's also a change to the function of the chorus here: now it serves as the refrain rather than either as opening lines or a post-refrain event. This adds another layer of variety to the freewheeling form, with the function of the chorus not revealed until after the first verse.

The structure of the first verse-chorus pair (Example 28) sets the template for Dylan's subsequent verses. We first hear the chorus, with its *abac* melodic construction. When the verse begins, Dylan includes three melodic units: an opening line that is similar to the *a* melody of the chorus,

[38] The song was included on *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1–3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961–1991* (1991) and *The Bootleg Series Vol. 6: Bob Dylan Live 1964, Concert at Philharmonic Hall* (2004).

[39] Harvey (2001, 121–122) suggests that Dylan supported an abolition of boxing as a sport and that what concerned the singer was "that no one connected with the incident would accept responsibility."

[40] For more on Dylan's reciting tones, see Rings (2013, 31; 2025, 106–113).



Example 26. Dylan, "Davey Moore," melodic and harmonic trajectory for the chorus and verses.

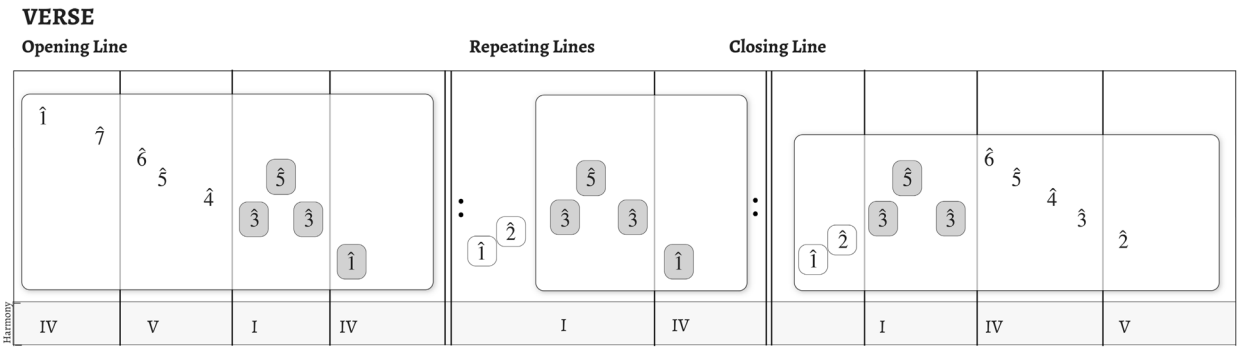
	Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4	Verse 5	Verse 6
Chorus	1 2					
Repeating lines	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
	Refrain	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Refrain**	**Chorus**
	Chorus	**Chorus**	**Chorus**	**Chorus**	**Chorus**	

Example 27. Dylan, "Davey Moore," verse comparisons.

Chorus	Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me In the jingle jangle morning I'll come following you

PART 1	**Opening line**	Though I know that evening's empire has returned into sand
	Repeating lines	Vanished from my hand
	Closing line	Left me blindly here to stand but still not sleeping
PART 2	**Opening line**	My weariness amazes me, I'm branded on my feet
	Repeating lines	I have no one to meet
	Closing line	And the ancient empty street's too dead for dreaming

Example 28. Dylan, "Mr. Tambourine Man," structure for the first chorus and two-part verse with internal three-part structures.



Example 29. Dylan, "Mr. Tambourine Man," verse mapping (repeated twice per verse).

Chorus	Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me In the jingle jangle morning I'll come following you

PART 1	**Opening line**	And take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind
	Repeating lines	Down the foggy ruins of time Far past the frozen leaves The haunted, frightened trees Out of the windy beach
	Closing line	Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow
PART 2	**Opening line**	Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free
	Repeating lines	Silhouetted by the sea Circled with the circus sands With all memory and fate Driven deep beneath the waves
	Closing line	Let me forget about today until tomorrow

Example 30. Dylan, "Mr. Tambourine Man," Chorus and Verse 4 structure.

repeating lines derived from the end of the opening line melody (though not yet repeated in this verse), and a closing line that shows similarity to the *c* line of the chorus. I've chosen here to call these "closing lines" because the text changes with each version so they're not acting like true refrains. After the closing line we again hear the chorus, which functions like the refrain.

Example 29 maps the melodic and harmonic trajectory for the verses. Like some other freewheeling forms, the repeating lines are reduced to two-bar units, creating a fragmentation function that releases to the closing line of each part of the verse. The fragmentation is underscored by the melodic similarity between the end of the opening line and the repeating lines (highlighted in gray in the mapping) and between the repeating lines and the closing line (the individual scale-degrees are enclosed in boxes, which overlap with the $\hat{3}$–$\hat{5}$–$\hat{3}$ motive in gray). These parallelisms create potential for repetition and blur the boundaries between the initial sections. The possibility for cycling through the repeating lines is clearer in later verses, like Verse 4 (Example 30), illustrated in Video Example 8.

Video Example 8. Dylan, "Mr. Tambourine Man," Verse 4 trajectory.

Comparing the verses (Example 31), the total number of repeating lines within each verse increases as the song progresses. Taking the outer verses as models, this cumulative process seems evenly distributed across the two parts of the verses: Dylan's initial verse has a single iteration of the repeating line in each part whereas his final verse has

		Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4
PART 1	Opening line	1	1	1	1
	Repeating lines	1	1 2 3	1 2	1 2 3 4
	Closing line	1	1	1	1
PART 2	Opening line	1	1	1	1
	Repeating lines	1	1	1 2 3	1 2 3 4
	Closing line	1	1	1	1

Example 31. Dylan, "Mr. Tambourine Man," verse comparisons.

four repetitions each. But comparing each part of the middle verses dispels any notion that this form is internally cumulative or experienced as such. Verse 2 has three repeating lines in part 1 and only one iteration in part 2. Verse 3 cycles through two repeating lines in the first part and three in the second. So rather than choosing to add repeating lines one at a time to progress from one statement to four over the four verses, Dylan instead chooses a path of unpredictability—a freewheeling approach, if you will—for "Mr. Tambourine Man" in a verse-chorus context. This fits better with the enigmatic nature of the titular Tambourine Man, who does not himself seem systematic, preferring instead to follow flights of artistic and nature-based inspiration.

5. Freewheeling AABA Form

The final example in this study, Buffy Sainte-Marie's song "Hey, Little Bird," further modifies two central features of the freewheeling singer-songwriter forms explored thus far. First, it breaks from the voice-and-guitar texture commonly associated with singer-songwriters to offer more complex, orchestral accompaniment.[41] Alongside typical rock instruments like piano, guitar, bass, and drums, the song's setting also includes glockenspiel and high-register woodwinds in dissonant harmonies that help convey the energy and timbre of this quirky bird song. Second, Sainte-Marie's song explores how a freewheeling structure can map onto AABA form (Example 32).[42] Her lyrics, rather than focusing on topical protest music, are instead concerned with the growth, flights, and dreams of the titular, "little bird."

Buffy Sainte-Marie is an artist who navigated the same musical and stylistic circles as Bob Dylan during the Greenwich Village coffeehouse scene. She is best known as a singer who contributed protest songs to the singer-songwriter canon, including the Native American protest songs "Now That the Buffalo's Gone" and "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" as well as the anti-war song "Universal Soldier."[43] Her first three albums are in a folk genre, including mostly strophic songs that either adapt existing songs from her contemporaries or folk revival sources, or offer original contributions within 1960s folk styles like blues and ballad traditions. Her fourth studio album, *Fire & Fleet & Candlelight* (1967), mostly continues with this trend, but a few outliers are original songs that push beyond folk-revivalist influences. "Hey, Little Bird" is one such example.

The song's first A section (Example 33) provides a prototypical three-part structure that forms the scaffolding of the subsequent A sections, with only one statement of the repeating line. This prototype is repeated in A2, which also has one repeating line. It is only in A3 (Example 34) that the freewheeling structure begins to emerge, with four iterations of the repeating melody. The first of these is two bars, which emerges as a possible prototype, but the second (which sets the text "I am a thrush now and you

[41] Peter Schickele (also known as P.D.Q. Bach) is cited as providing orchestration for three songs on the album, including "Hey Little Bird."

[42] It is common in popular music for AABA forms to include a repetition of BA at the end of the song, as discussed Hudson (2021) and Nobile (2020, 125–147). Sainte-Marie's song does a variation of this which includes a new contrasting section, which I've called a Bridge, though this could just as easily be classified as B2.

[43] Sainte-Marie was initially promoted in the 1960s as a Cree folk singer, born on the Piapot First Nations Reserve in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. A 2023 investigation from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (the CBC) has found no evidence of Cree ancestry in Sainte-Marie's heritage (Guerriero 2023).

	Intro	A1	A2	B	A3	Bridge	A4	Coda
Timings	0:00–0:07	0:07–0:20	0:20–0:33	0:33–0:47	0:47–1:13	1:13–1:27	1:27–2:04	2:04–2:11
Key	B♭	B♭	B♭	B♭	B♭	B♭ → C	C	B♭

Example 32. Buffy Sainte-Marie, "Hey Little Bird," modified AABA form.

Opening line	Hey, little bird, I remember you
Repeating lines	You and your dreams up higher than you could fly
Refrain	I remember you

Example 33. Sainte-Marie, "Hey Little Bird," three-part structure of the A1 lyrics.

Opening line	So, little bird
Repeating lines	The times have changed considerably I am a thrush now and you are a peacock indeed So flash your colors and I will sing Glide into time with the moon on your wing
Transition to Bridge	Little bird, little bird, little bird

Example 34. Sainte-Marie, "Hey Little Bird," three-part structure of A3.

are a peacock indeed") extends the unit to four bars. After this, Sainte-Marie returns to two-bar units for the final two melodic cycles. She adds further formal confusion by proceeding from the repeating lines to a transition to the bridge rather than the refrain.

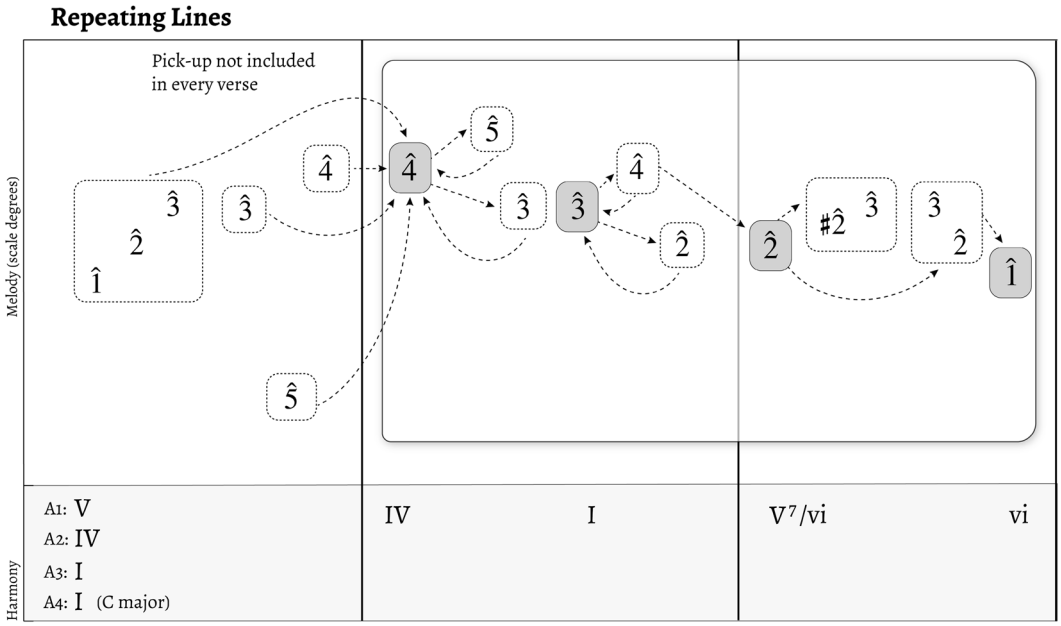
The final A section, A4 (Example 35), is a culmination of the freewheeling AABA form's potential as set up by the previous A sections. It features the single two-bar opening line (shortening the four-bar templates of the opening lines for the A1 and A2 sections), eight two-bar repeating lines, and a statement of the four-bar refrain. Video Example 9 illustrates Sainte-Marie's path through the repeating lines in A4. The mapping (Example 36) shows a variety of melodic trajectories for the underlying 4̂–3̂–2̂–1̂ melodic descent (shown in gray) of the repeating lines in the A sections. Her florid melodic paths musically illustrate the paths of the little bird's "transcendent" travels.

Video Example 9. Sainte-Marie, "Hey, Little Bird," A4 trajectory.

Like the cumulative form examples explored earlier, "Hey, Little Bird" does have verses of increasing length, but Sainte-Marie's approach is more dramatic than adding a single line each strophe. In Example 37, I compare the A sections within the context of the song's overall form. After a short introduction, Sainte-Marie begins A1 and A2 with four-bar opening lines followed by a single two-bar repeating line unit and a two-bar refrain. She's initially concealing the potential for these lines to repeat. After an eight-bar B section, A3 includes a two-bar opening line, four repeating lines (the second of which is four measures), and then omits the refrain to include a four-bar transition to the song's bridge. Following the eight-bar bridge, Sainte-Marie achieves the full freewheeling potential of her three-part A section structure in A4, which begins with a two-bar opening line, followed by eight iterations of the repeating line and a four-bar refrain. To round out the form, Sainte-Marie brings back the four-bar version of her opening lines (first heard in A1) as an outro. As the repeating lines cycle through the A4 section, the text is expansive as if echoing the ever more sprawling view of the titular bird as it flies further from its source, reinforced by the modulation up to C major for this section. Returning to the opening lines in her outro offers the promise of the bird returning and continuing the cycle of migrations anew. Sainte-Marie's use of freewheeling AABA form adds to the song's quirky character. Further, it showcases how this formal technique can be applied to forms beyond strophic and verse-chorus contexts.

Opening line	So, little bird
Repeating lines	Take my blessings to the stars above you And scatter my wishes to the ones who love you Take off often on a trip transcendent And sink in the waves and then rise resplendent Fly with your friends in a "V" formation And sing to the flocks from your vantage station Out in the stars beyond hell's dominion And rest at my feet in between migrations
Refrain	Little bird, I remember you

Example 35. Sainte-Marie, "Hey, Little Bird," three-part structure of A4.



Example 36. Sainte-Marie, "Hey, Little Bird," repeating line mapping.

	Intro (4 bars)	A1	A2	B (8 bars)	A3	Bridge (8 bars)	A4	Outro
Opening lines		4 bars	4 bars		2 bars		2 bars	4 bars
Repeating lines		1	1		1 2* 3 4		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	
		Refrain (2 bars)	**Refrain** (2 bars)		**Transition to Bridge** (4 bars)		**Refrain** (4 bars)	

Repeating lines are 2 bars unless otherwise noted.

*second repeated line is 4 bars

Example 37. Sainte-Marie, "Hey, Little Bird," verse comparisons.

Artist	Song	Freewheeling Form Type	Lyrical Theme	Repeating Lines (compared to standard four-bar phrase lengths)
Bob Dylan	"Only a Pawn in Their Game"	strophic	topical	shorter: 2 bars
	"A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall"	strophic	broad sentiment	similar length
	"The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll"	strophic	topical	similar length
Paul Simon	"A Most Peculiar Man"	strophic	topical	much shorter: 1 bar
Bob Dylan	"Who Killed Davey Moore?"	verse-chorus	topical	shorter: 2 bars
	"Mr. Tambourine Man"	verse-chorus	surrealist adventure	shorter: 2 bars
Buffy Sainte-Marie	"Hey, Little Bird"	AABA	nature/adventure	shorter: 2 bars

Example 38. Summary of freewheeling form examples in 1960s singer-songwriter music.

Conclusion

The preceding examples illustrate the ways that freewheeling strophic form and its variants arose in 1960s singer-songwriter music to enliven formal structures and highlight lyrical meaning. Building on Example 4, Example 38 summarizes the findings from the seven singer-songwriter tracks in this study. Four of the seven songs are in freewheeling strophic form, and four have topical protest themes. The repeating line phrase units are typically shorter than the surrounding material, creating momentum in this penultimate section that is similar to the fragmentation units of sentence structures before a cadence. While freewheeling strophic form is the clear formal prototype, its "freewheeling" characteristics can also arise in other forms with repeating units, like the verses of verse–chorus form and the A sections of AABA form. As the examples in this study have demonstrated, the prototypical freewheeling strophic form is a three-part structure with an internal repeating line. Like its precedent in cumulative and enumerative songs, the length of each verse can vary. But rather than gradually increase in size, one added line at a time, the "freewheeling" quality of this form arises in the expansion and contraction of strophes, with lines being added and removed in an improvisatory manner. The singer offers as much of the story as needed each verse regardless of how much was told in the previous verse. The repeating lines of these freewheeling forms offer a unique storytelling opportunity for these songwriters, and became a vehicle for poetic imagery, clever rhetorical devices, and formal structures imbued with the qualities of aliveness and creativity associated with this period of singer-songwriter music.

References

Baker, Ben. 2025. "Themes and (Improvised) Variations in Modern Jazz Palimpsests." In *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Variation*, edited by Jeffrey Swinkin, 860–884. Oxford University Press.

"The Barley Mow." 2026. *English Folk Dance & Song Society*. Accessed February 13, 2026. https://www.efdss.org/?view=article&id=2540:efdss-resource-bank-chorus-barley-mow&catid=55&highlight=WyJjdW11bGFoaXZlIiwic29uZ3MiXQ==.

"Bob Dylan's Tribute to Medgar Evers Took On the Big Picture." *NPR*. 2026. Accessed July 3, 2026. https://www.npr.org/2013/06/12/190743651/bob-dylans-tribute-to-medgar-evers-took-on-the-big-picture.

"Beginners' Guides: English Folk Song — Types of Folk Song." 2025. *English Folk Dance & Song Society*. Accessed February 13, 2026. https://www.efdss.org/learning/resources/beginners-guides/52-english-folk-song/15410-efdss-types-of-folk-song.

Bennighof, James. 2007. *The Words and Music of Paul Simon*. The Praeger Singer-Songwriter Collection. Praeger.

Bentley, Christa Anne. 2016. "Los Angeles Troubadours: The Politics of the Singer-Songwriter Movement, 1968–1975." PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Brackett, David. 1995. *Interpreting Popular Music*. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, Sheila MacKenzie. 2014. "Same Form, Slightly Different Function: Senegalese Cumulative Songs as Contrasted to Their Canadian and European Counterparts." *The Phenomenon of Singing International Symposium VIII* 8.

Burkholder, J. Peter. 1995a. *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing*. Yale University Press.

———. 1995b. "Cumulative Form in Ives and Others." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, New York.

Covach, John. 2005. "Form in Rock Music: A Primer." In *Engaging Music: Essays in Music Analysis*, edited by Deborah Stein, 65–76. Oxford University Press.

Ensign, Jeffrey S. 2015. "Form in Popular Song, 1990–2009." PhD diss., University of North Texas.

Everett, Walter. 1999. *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver Through the Anthology*. Oxford University Press.

———. 2008. *The Foundations of Rock: From "Blue Suede Shoes" to "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes."* Oxford University Press.

Frisch, Walter. 1984. *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*. University of California Press.

Guerriero, Linda, dir. 2023. *Making an Icon*. The Fifth Estate. CBC.

Hudson, Stephen S. 2021. "Compound AABA Form and Style Distinction in Heavy Metal." *Music Theory Online* 27 (1).

Harvey, Todd. 2001. *The Formative Dylan: Transmission and Stylistic Influences, 1961–1963*. The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Karpeles, Maud, ed. 1974. *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*. Oxford University Press.

Krebs, Harald. 2025. "Expressive Functions of Variation in the German Lied." In *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Variation*, edited by Jeffrey Swinkin, 434–451. Oxford University Press.

Lerner, Murray. 2007. *Bob Dylan: The Other Side of the Mirror*. Sony Legacy.

Malawey, Victoria. 2014. "Strophic Modification in Songs by Amy Beach." *Music Theory Online* 20 (4).

Monk, Ray. 2021. "Bob Dylan at 80: Why 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll' Is His Greatest Protest Song." Accessed February 17, 2026. https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/culture/37642/bob-dylan-at-80-why-the-lonesome-death-of-hattie-carroll-is-his-greatest-protest-song.

Murphy, Nancy. 2023. *Times A-Changin': Flexible Meter as Self-Expression in Singer-Songwriter Music*. Oxford University Press.

———. 2024–25. "The Performed-Out Fermata from the 1920s to Bob Dylan." *Theory and Practice*, 49–50.

Nobile, Drew. 2020. *Form as Harmony in Rock Music*. Oxford University Press.

Pennebaker, D. A. 2011. *Bob Dylan: Don't Look Back*. Docudrama.

Rings, Steven. 2013. "A Foreign Sound to Your Ear: Bob Dylan Performs 'It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding),' 1964–2009." *Music Theory Online* 19 (4).

———. 2025. *What Did You Hear? The Music of Bob Dylan*. University of Chicago Press.

Russell, Craig. 1997. "The Idiom of Simon and the Image of Dylan: When Do Stars Cast Shadows?" In *Music in Performance and Society: Essays in Honor of Roland Jackson*, edited by Malcolm Cole and John Koegel, 289–297. Harmonie Park Press.

Scorsese, Martin. 2005. *No Direction Home*. Hollywood: Paramount.

Sharp, Cecil. 1919. *English Folk Songs: Collected and Arranged with Pianoforte Accompaniment*. Novello.

Smith, John A. 2000. "Singing and Songwriting Support Early Literacy Instruction." *The Reading Teacher* 53 (8): 646–649.

Snyder, John L. 2025. "Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Symphonic Variations on an African Air: Structure, Narrative, Meaning." In *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Variation*, edited by Jeffrey Swinkin, 369–402. Oxford University Press.

"Songs & Lyrics: A Most Peculiar Man." 2026. Accessed July 6, 2026. https://www.paulsimon.com/song/most-peculiar-man/.

Spicer, Mark. 2004. "(Ac)cumulative Form in Pop-Rock Music." *Twentieth-Century Music* 1 (1): 29–64.

Stephan-Robinson, Anna. 2009. "Form in Paul Simon's Music." PhD diss., University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music.

Summach, Jay. 2011. "The Structure, Function, and Genesis of the Prechorus." *Music Theory Online* 17 (3).

Discography

Denver, John, and the Muppets. 1979. *John Denver and the Muppets: A Christmas Together*. RCA Victor AFL1-3451.

Dylan, Bob. 1963. *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. Columbia CL 1986.

———. 1964. *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. Columbia CL 2105.

———. 1965. *Bringing It All Back Home*. Columbia CS 9128.

———. 2004. *The Bootleg Series Vol. 6: Bob Dylan Live 1964, Concert at Philharmonic Hall*. Columbia 512358 2.

———. 2013. *50th Anniversary Collection 1963*.

Sainte-Marie, Buffy. 1967. *Fire & Fleet & Candlelight*. Vanguard VSD-9250.

Seeger, Pete. 1955. *Birds, Beasts, Bugs and Little Fishes*. Folkways FC 7010.

———. 1958. *Sleep-Time: Songs & Stories*. Folkways FC 7525.

Simon, Paul. 1965. *The Paul Simon Songbook*. Columbia EL 111.

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 48–67

Once upon a Time: One-Time Occurrences as Structural and Formal Markers*

by Ram Reuven

Abstract. This article examines *one-time occurrences* (OTOs)—single events or larger groupings occurring only once within a work—that function as structural and formal markers. It outlines a typology of OTOs grounded in three sources of marked singularity (motivic deviation, parametric extremity, and absence or omission) and shows how their salience emerges against established patterns of repetition and expectation. Through case studies from the common-practice tonal repertoire, the article demonstrates how OTOs articulate cadential arrivals, momentum toward closure, sectional boundaries, and narrative pivots. The analyses integrate formal, voice-leading, and hypermetric perspectives. Treating OTOs as analytical objects clarifies how the rarity and marked status of singular events shape formal articulation and guide listening.

Keywords and phrases: One-time occurrence (OTO); repetition; motivic deviation; extremity; absence.

Introduction

Contextually unusual musical occurrences, often climactic or strikingly distinct, frequently articulate structural or formal goals. This study focuses on a particular subset of such occurrences whose markedness arises not only from deviation or extremity but also from their singularity: *one-time occurrences* (OTOs). These OTOs may consist of single events, such as individual notes or beats, or of larger units like motives, phrases, or episodes that appear only once within a given piece.[1] OTOs represent the highest degree of rarity and can heighten perceptual salience even when the material itself is understated.

This study examines how OTOs can articulate formal and syntactic milestones by marking cadential arrivals, directing momentum toward closure, or delineating sec-

* I gratefully acknowledge Naphtali Wagner and Yosef Goldenberg for their valuable contributions to this manuscript.

[1] In this article, the delineation of a unit is constrained by at least one of three conditions: repetition, separation, or schema. *Repetition* groups several immediately successive events into a single perceptual unit when the same material is immediately repeated. *Separation* entails distinct contrast with surrounding material, often reinforced by internal unity. *Schema* refers to culturally or stylistically internalized patterns of musical organization. Such schematic patterns include components considered fundamental to Western art music, such as scales and rhythmic patterns (Krumhansl 1990; Meyer 1989); specific styles and genres, such as Galant style schemas (Gjerdingen 2007); and piece-specific schemas, such as idiosyncratic motives (Zbikowski 1999). In the context of the present article, which focuses on one-time occurrences, repetition is relevant primarily as a background condition: it establishes a field of recurrent material against the non-recurrence of a particular unit, rendering what does not return particularly salient.

tional boundaries. While such functions may occur across diverse repertoires, this study focuses on common-practice Western tonal music, where the interaction between syntactic and formal articulation offers a particularly fertile ground for examining the expressive potential of singular events.

As Arnold Schoenberg observed, "intelligibility in music seems to be impossible without repetition" (Schoenberg 1967, 20, quoted in Margulis 2014, 5). Analytical discourse has long emphasized recurrence—whether simple or varied, overt or latent—as central to motivic development, formal construction, and perceptual coherence. Identifying patterns of repetition among thematic, motivic, rhythmic, and harmonic elements is foundational to much musical analysis. These repetitions create connections between musical events, contribute to internal logic, and suggest that the work's elements are not random.

By contrast, OTOs, defined here by the absence of repetition in at least one parameter (possibly against a background of continued repetition in other parameters), have rarely been treated as an independent object of inquiry. While singularity is sometimes acknowledged in particular theoretical traditions—for instance, in discussions of melodic climax—it has not been systematically explored as a distinct analytical category.[2] Unlike repetition, which is readily classified and often foundational to analytical methods, singularity is often regarded as incidental or anecdotal. This paper argues that OTOs merit analytical consideration in their own right and accordingly develops an analytical framework and typology of OTOs grounded in three sources of marked singularity: motivic deviation (alteration of familiar material), parametric extremity (climax or saturation in a single parameter), and absence or omission (suppression of repetition or other expected material).

The present study employs *markedness* in a restricted sense. Following Robert Hatten (1994, 291–292), markedness is "the asymmetrical valuation of an opposition (in musical structure, language, culture)": a marked element is rarer in distribution and possesses greater specificity of meaning than its unmarked counterpart. In the present context, this opposition concerns a singular, marked occurrence and a more regular, repetitive, unmarked background. Cast in structural, formal, and perceptual terms, markedness here refers to occurrences whose rarity and deviation from an established context of repetition assign them prominent roles in musical design, articulating formal and structural organization. This restricted usage remains compatible with Hatten's (1994, 2004) semiotic model of markedness without invoking the full semiotic or narrative apparatus of his theory. Markedness involves not only differences in relative frequency but also differences in evaluative weight: the rarer element in an opposition acquires a distinct cultural and stylistic weight, shaped by what a given musical culture or interpretive community—historically situated composers, performers, listeners, and analysts engaged with this repertoire—takes to be important (Almén 2008, 47–48). In this light, the type of OTO considered in this study is not simply any one-time occurrence, but a singularity accorded relatively high value within a given stylistic and analytical frame—for instance, by its participation in cadential positions, formal hinges, registral peaks, or other locations that independent structural and formal analyses already identify as prominent.[3]

Within this framework, the marked status of an OTO is not an intrinsic property of the sounding event but reflects an evaluative stance grounded in stylistic norms and listening practices. In this sense, OTOs emerge through analytical engagement with music rather than existing as ontologically self-sufficient entities in the score. From this perspective, the relevant question is not whether OTOs exist as pre-given entities in the score, but how particular occurrences are identified and interpreted as OTOs within specific stylistic, cultural, and analytical frames, and under what conditions such identifications are analytically persuasive. In the present study, such occurrences are confined to notated configurations of pitch (including contour, harmony, and register), rhythmic structure, and texture. These occurrences are examined at time scales ranging from local motives, phrases, and sections to complete movements and, in one case, the finale of an operatic act. Other poten-

[2] A comprehensive review of climax theories can be found in Lee (2018). The pitch climax in a species-counterpoint phrase exemplifies a rare curricular treatment of an OTO: Knud Jeppesen's ([1931] 1992, 109–110) species-counterpoint pedagogy in the Palestrina style prescribes a single-pitch climax in didactic cantus firmi and species melodies, and subsequent counterpoint textbooks adopt this rule even beyond Palestrina-style counterpoint (e.g., Salzer and Schachter [1969] 1989, 4–5). Explicit discussion of the single-pitch climax as an analytical parameter is largely confined to such counterpoint pedagogy, with only a few attempts to integrate it into broader analytical models (e.g., Eitan 1997).

[3] Byron Almén's (2008, 47–48) distinction between markedness (the evaluative imbalance within an opposition) and rank (the relative importance of features within a passage) helps clarify why only some singularities qualify as analytically significant OTOs. In the present context, among the many local deviations a work may contain, those granted higher rank in the unfolding chain of occurrences contribute most decisively to what is perceived as structural and formal articulation. In the case studies that follow, formal and structural salience and singular design features are treated as jointly shaping the analysis: independently motivated formal and voice-leading considerations provide the basis for assigning structural weight to a given passage, while the presence of a locally salient OTO—whether subtle or striking—can focus analytical judgment, support it, or at times tilt it between competing structural interpretations.

tial singularities, such as microtiming nuances or multi-movement constellations, lie beyond the present scope.

The perceptual salience of an OTO often arises not in isolation, but through its contrast with a stable context of repetition and expectation. Repetition across motivic, rhythmic, and textural dimensions establishes a framework against which deviations become more salient. Thus, repetition and singularity operate as complementary forces: repetition creates the conditions that make an OTO's uniqueness perceptible.

Two notions central to the analytical status of OTOs draw on complementary strands of scholarship. First, the notion of locally salient events that articulate boundaries and pivots is informed by work on perceptual segmentation and similarity in music. This scholarship addresses perceptually salient local features or cues that stand out from the musical surface and are implicated in processes that segment the acoustic continuum into discrete events, streams, and larger-scale groupings (Cambouropoulos 2009, 11–13). Second, the relation between a particular occurrence and a background of repetition is examined in scholarship on recontextualization and repetition perception, which examines how perceived musical sameness arises from the recurrence of an element across contextually distinct instances (Hanninen 2003, 59–60, 70–72; Margulis 2014, chap. 2). Taken together, these perspectives highlight how local cues and recurrent patterns shape listeners' perceptual segmentation of the musical surface across multiple time scales. The present study asks what happens when a salient occurrence is not part of a chain of recurrence, focusing on OTOs that function as boundary- and pivot-marking cues. For these OTOs, a lack of recurrence against an established background of repetition supports their role in marking structural and formal significance rather than their relegation to incidental or anecdotal status.

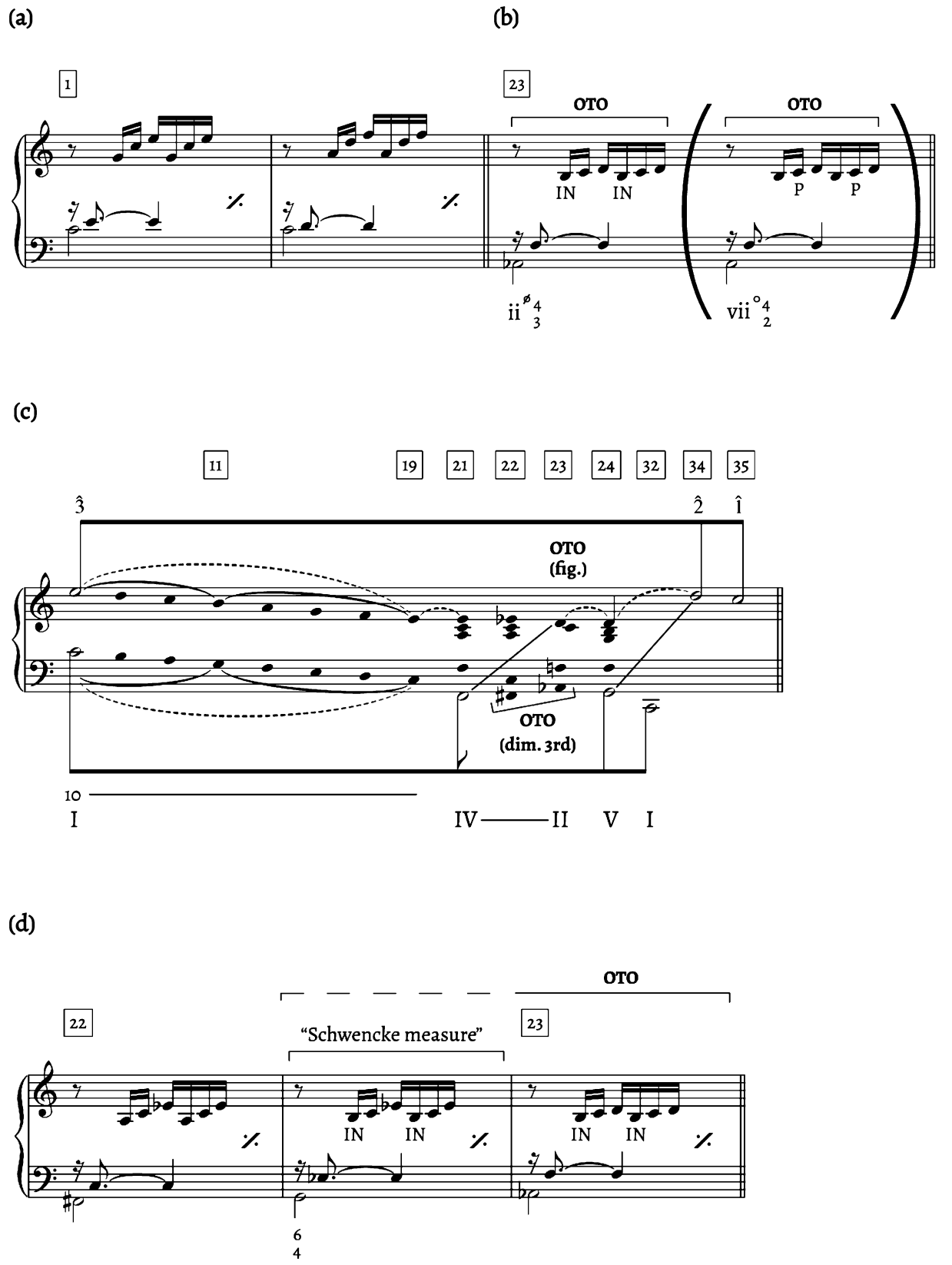
This paper begins by examining clear cases of OTOs that stand out against highly uniform textures, showing how altered motives or extreme events create salient moments that mark formal boundaries and pivotal points. It then turns to an extreme OTO in a sonata-form movement and to an operatic example in which an OTO functions as a narrative hinge between dramatic realms. A subsequent section broadens the focus to OTOs grounded in absence or omission, including silence, suppressed pitch classes, and the nonappearance of highly recurrent motives. The article culminates with a J. S. Bach fugue that integrates multiple OTO types at cadential and sectional junctures.

1. OTOs in Uniform Motivic Textures

The first three examples are composed by Bach: Prelude in C Major, the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (*WTC I*), BWV 846; Invention in E♭ Major, BWV 776; and the Gigue from the Partita No. 1 in B♭ Major, BWV 825. These pieces feature OTOs that deviate from the consistent motivic frameworks that unify each composition. These frameworks are reinforced through multiple repetitions that solidify underlying motives in the listener's memory and intensify the impact of each unexpected occurrence. The OTO's impact is especially heightened when a single motive is repeated continuously throughout, as in Bach's Prelude.

The governing motive in the Prelude is a half-measure five-voice figuration (Example 1a, m. 1) that occurs twice per measure throughout mm. 1–32 (only in mm. 33–35 does Bach suspend this framework). Within these initial thirty-two measures, the figuration always includes at least one leap in the right hand, and chord tones are unambiguous. The figuration consists of an arpeggiated triad (as in m. 1) or seventh chord (as in m. 2) and occasional suspended tones—but no passing or neighboring notes. Only in m. 23, as depicted in Example 1b, does Bach deviate from this consistent figuration by introducing an altered melodic shape in the right hand: a three-note stepwise span. This deviation generates local ambiguity: either B_3 functions as an incomplete neighbor to C_4 within $\text{ii}^{\varnothing 4}_{3}$, or C_4 functions as a passing tone within $\text{vii}^{\circ 4}_{2}$. Example 1c, a middleground summary after Schenker ([1932] 1969), demonstrates Schenker's preference for the first option: the incomplete neighbor B_3 is omitted from m. 23, and the harmony is presented using four voices rather than five. The graph also provides broader context, showing that the OTO occurs on the last chord in the pre-dominant area. Additionally, this is where the structural $\hat{2}$ of the *Urlinie* makes its first appearance, just before progressing to the dominant. Thus, this OTO serves as a structure-highlighting marker, and it joins another OTO with the same function: the salient diminished-third leap in the bass between mm. 22 and 23, which is the Prelude's only diminished melodic interval.[4] Some earlier editions of the *WTC* smoothed this rough leap by adding a mediating passing six-four chord, known as the "Schwencke measure," shown in Example 1d. The additional measure undermines both OTOs: first, it cancels the bass

[4] John Rothgeb (1971, 231) argues that changes in surface design often coincide with important structural points and thus warrant particularly careful scrutiny when formulating or confirming an analysis. Working within a Schenkerian voice-leading framework, he shows how shifts in surface design—such as grouping, register, dynamics, and expression marks—can determine whether a harmony counts as structurally decisive or merely transitional, and they can clarify the placement of cadential goals. The present article is related to this concern with surface design, but it concentrates on occurrences whose singularity within a work heightens their function as structural markers, treating OTOs as a specific subclass of the surface changes that Rothgeb considers as potential evidence for structural weight.



Example 1. Analysis of Bach, Prelude in C Major, WTC I, *BWV 846: (a) mm. 1–2; (b) m. 23; (c) voice-leading graph after Schenker; (d) "Schwencke measure" added between mm. 22 and 23.*

OTO, and second, it extends the right-hand OTO backward into the added measure (because both the added measure and m. 23 contain an incomplete right-hand neighbor, the occurrence in m. 23 loses its singular status and its salient effect is weakened). Interestingly, the non-chordal B_3 in the added measure, functioning as an incomplete neighbor to C_4, seems to support Schenker's decision to omit B_3 in m. 23 of his analysis (Example 1c).

The OTO in Bach's Invention in E♭ Major, BWV 776, arises under more complex circumstances. Unlike the figuration in the Prelude, which recurs continuously, the pattern that underlies the Invention's OTO occurs in only about 60% of the piece. Additionally, the OTO does not result from a deviation within a single statement of the recurring pattern but from the contour of its melodic sequencing.

The Invention, analyzed in Example 2, is designed as a free mini-fugue with double counterpoint and a modulatory subject. The Invention includes two rotations, labeled Rot. 1 (mm. 1–11) and Rot. 2 (mm. 12–22), followed by a final phrase (mm. 23–32). The brackets above the system indicate that each rotation consists of an exposition (*dux* and *comes*) and an episode, while the final phrase consists of a retransitional double episode and a non-modulatory extended subject. The main motive, fully displayed in m. 1 on the *ossia* staff, features a stepwise ascent of a perfect fourth, the first note of which is decorated with a lower neighbor. In Example 2, all instances of this motive are labeled with a bracket; on the main staffs, the motive is reduced to a four-note stepwise ascent. Bach sequences this melodic pattern in both the expositions and the episodes. In Example 2, each sequence is marked with an arrow that indicates its beginning and direction, and each sequential pattern begins with a stem. All sequences ascend except the framed sequence in episode 2, which descends; hence, this change of direction in an expected melodic contour is an OTO. Since this exceptional melodic sequence is played by the left hand, it is also harmonically exceptional: it creates a sort of cadential connection between its patterns until the actual cadence is finally obtained (ii:PAC). The OTO not only leads to the cadence but also emphasizes its structural status: this is the Invention's only cadence other than the final cadence. Moreover, the OTO also contributes to the form's articulation, as it emphasizes the junction between the last rotation and the non-rotational final phrase.

The OTOs observed in the Prelude and the Invention stand out for their singular occurrence, while remaining subtle in character. In the next example, a more salient OTO similarly emerges within a consistent motivic and textural framework and, in this instance, within a more complex form.

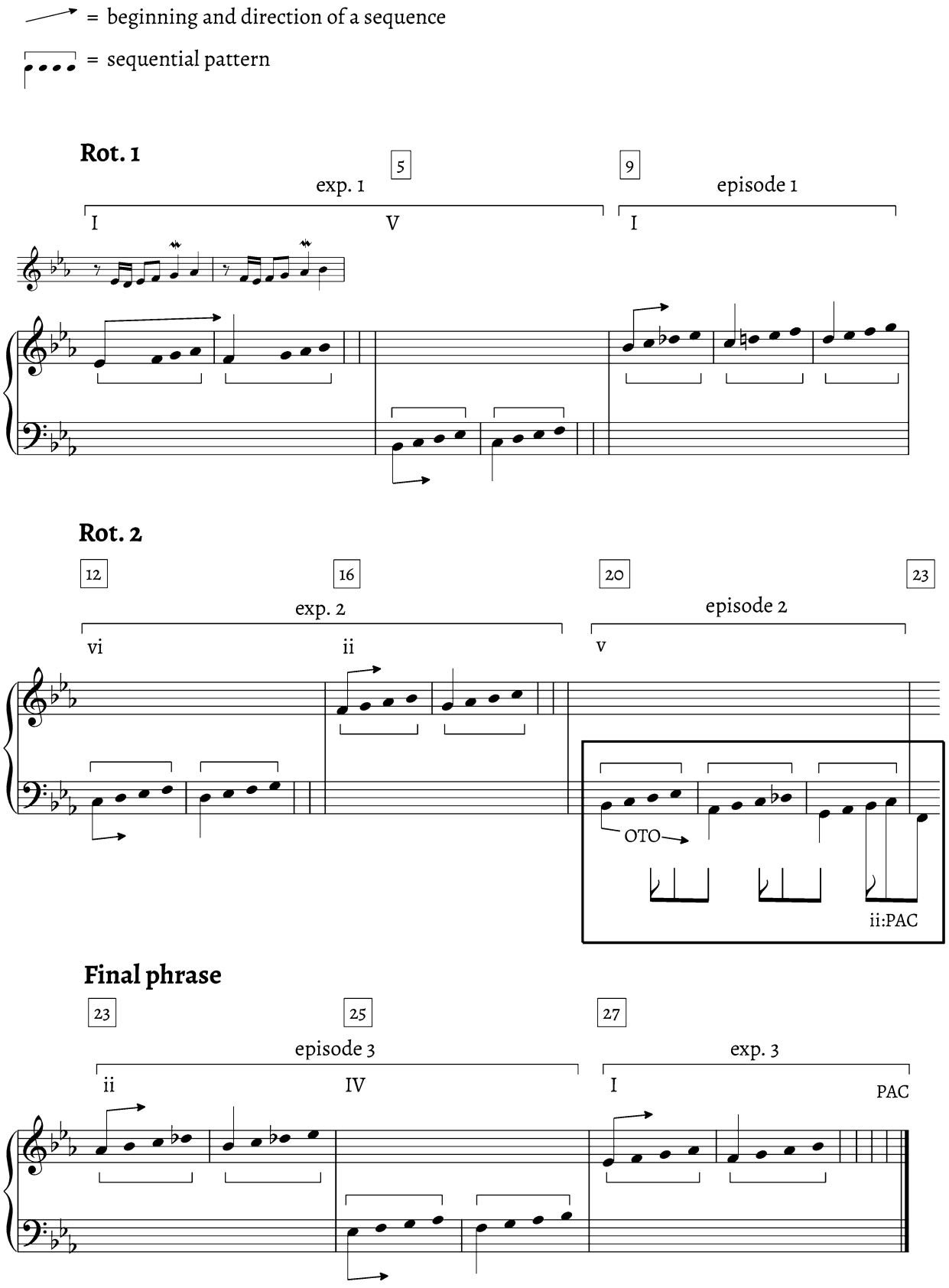
In the Gigue from Bach's Partita No. 1 for keyboard, BWV 825, the listener's expectations are stabilized by both the unified motivic and textural design shown in Example 3a and the consistent quadruple hypermeter. As shown in Example 4, the Gigue can be understood as comprising three rotations within a binary form.[5] These rotations are end-oriented due to the similarity of their concluding units: each rotation is a phrase consisting of two subphrases, the second of which is an eight-measure end rhyme (ER). Each ER consists of a dominant pedal point (DPP) followed by a PAC, and each ER occurs in a different key area.

The discussion below compares the opening subphrases of the Gigue's three rotations (see Example 4). Rot. 1 is symmetrical: both the first subphrase and the ER subphrase span eight measures, and the first subphrase is divided into an opening formula (mm. 1–4) and a modulatory unit (mm. 5–8). In Rot. 2, the first subphrase is reduced to four measures (mm. 17–20), functioning as both a medial repeat that echoes mm. 1–4 and a modulatory unit comparable to mm. 5–8. In this rotation, the DPP begins in m. 20, one measure before the onset of the ER. As a result of this nonconcurrence, the $F\sharp_5$ in m. 20 resolves not to the G_5 in m. 21, but instead to the G_5 in m. 28. The first subphrase of Rot. 3 does not resemble those of Rot. 1 and Rot. 2, nor does it serve the same function; rather, it acts as a retransition, beginning with a modulatory unit that leads back to the home key (mm. 28–31).[6] The DPP that begins in m. 32 precedes the ER, as in Rot. 2. However, after the V^{8-7} in mm. 32–33, Bach introduces a salient OTO that generates momentum into the ER and the final cadence: a seven-measure melodic sequence, comprising seven parallel diminished-seventh chords descending chromatically (mm. 34–40). Bach avoids strict consistency and does not spell these chords as literal parallels; rather, each appears in a different inversion. Another inconsistency occurs between mm. 39 and 40, where the progression departs from the preceding chromatic descent and instead descends by a whole step. Alongside the harmonic and voice-leading deviation introduced by the OTO, the texture changes subtly, featuring a half-measure figuration that occurs twice in each measure, similar to the Prelude in C Major (compare Examples 3b and 1a). Not only does the chromatic chain of diminished-seventh chords unsettle harmonic orientation, but its seven-measure span also disrupts the regular quadruple hypermeter, yielding hypermetric ambiguity.

This example from the Gigue differs from those derived from the Prelude and the Invention in that the OTO does not signal the arrival of a structural cadence, but

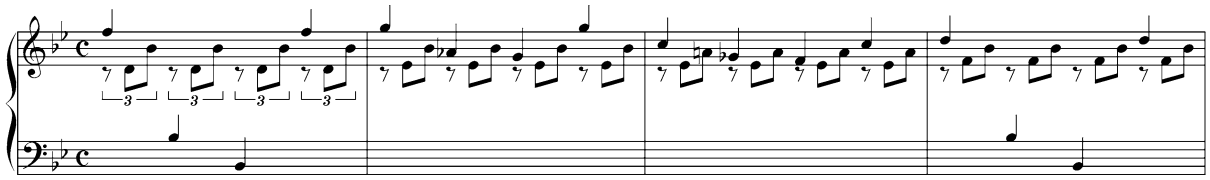
[5] The voice-leading graph in Example 4 is after Ernst Oster and David Beach (Beach 2008, 30–34).

[6] In Example 4, m. 28 is duplicated to indicate the overlap between Rots. 2 and 3.



Example 2. Analysis of Bach, Invention in E♭ Major, BWV 776.

(a)



(b)



Example 3. Bach, Gigue from Partita No. 1 in B♭ Major, BWV 825: (a) mm. 1–4; (b) mm. 34–40.

rather marks a formal juncture leading into the ER. Tonally, the OTO, fully contained within the DPP, interrupts the DPP and suspends its expected continuity, generating tension and heightening anticipation of its eventual reactivation. In retrospect, however, the DPP's return does not merely resume a process but initiates the ER as a new formal unit.

Despite its harmonic and contrapuntal irregularities, the OTO integrates coherently into the Gigue, aided both by preparation (the earlier ERs feature diminished-seventh chords that embellish structural dominants, and the half-measure figuration emerges as early as mm. 32–33) and by the smooth connection that follows. The progression from m. 40 to m. 41, though marked by a bass leap, lands on another diminished-seventh chord, creating a seamless connection into the final ER.

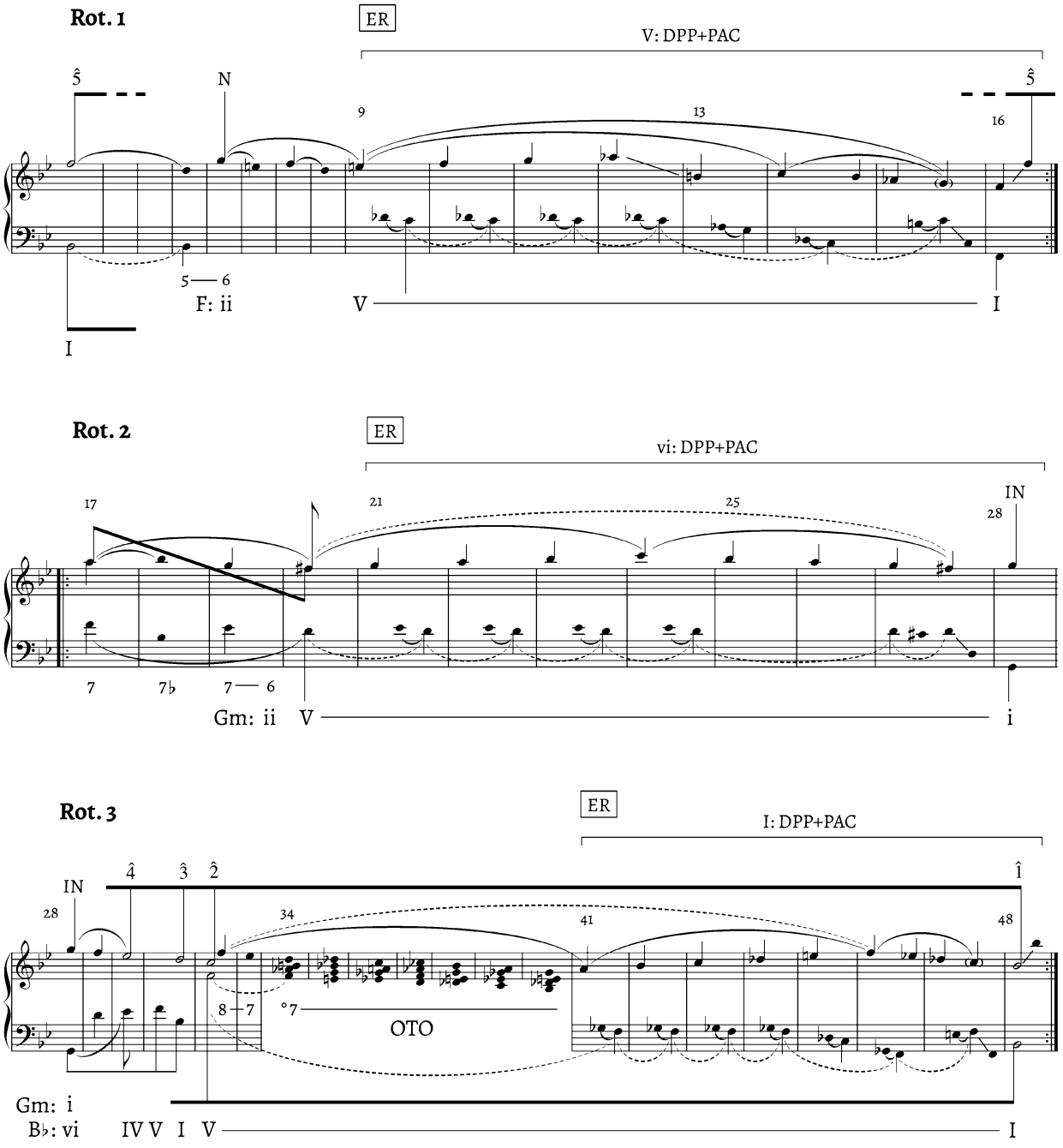
In the three examples discussed thus far—Bach's Prelude, Invention, and Gigue—the listener can recognize the OTO through its deviation from an otherwise uniform figurative or motivic framework, whether the OTO is subtle, as in the Prelude and Invention, or striking, as in the Gigue. Bach avoids gestures that might disrupt a tightly woven motivic fabric; instead, he draws attention to a single, carefully placed OTO that signals the arrival of a structural cadence or a formal unit. In a composition not organized around tightly repetitive motivic cells, an OTO that signals the arrival of a structural cadence or a formal unit may be more salient and may require contextual preparation to maintain coherence. Such a salient OTO, closely resembling the one in the Gigue, is the focus of the following analysis of a sonata-form movement by W. A. Mozart.

2. An Extreme OTO in Sonata Form

In the second movement of Mozart's Quintet in E♭ Major for Piano and Winds, K. 452, a particularly prominent OTO appears just before the ESC: nine parallel diminished-seventh chords (Example 5, mm. 106–108).[7] This unusual OTO stands out as a highly salient event within the movement. The exceptional features of the sonata form in this movement lead to an ambiguous ESC, and the OTO draws significant attention to this moment, effectively marking the ESC as a pivotal structural event. Despite its uniqueness, the OTO is well integrated into the movement through both an intensification process and preparatory material introduced early in the movement.

The second movement in the E♭-Major Quintet features a Type 3 sonata form with a continuous exposition of the Expansion-Section subtype, in which the transition

[7] Sonata-form terminology and abbreviations in this study follow Hepokoski and Darcy (2006).



Example 4. Analysis of the Gigue from Bach, Partita No. 1 in B♭ Major, BWV 825.



Example 5. OTO in Mozart, Quintet in E♭ Major for Piano and Winds, K. 452, II. Condensed Score of mm. 100–109.

evolves into a *Fortspinnung* (TR⇒FS).[8] Each of the two rotations is tripartite, consisting of the following sections:[9]

1. P: a compound period
2. TR⇒FS: a compound sentence concluding with the EEC or ESC
3. C: an expanded cadential progression repeated twice, followed by a codetta comprising brief cadential modules

Building on this formal framework, the OTO marks the climax of an intensification process within the TR⇒FS section of the recapitulation, as illustrated in Example 6. This intensification will now be examined in detail, starting with its harmonic and form-functional characteristics and then turning to its articulation through hypermeter.

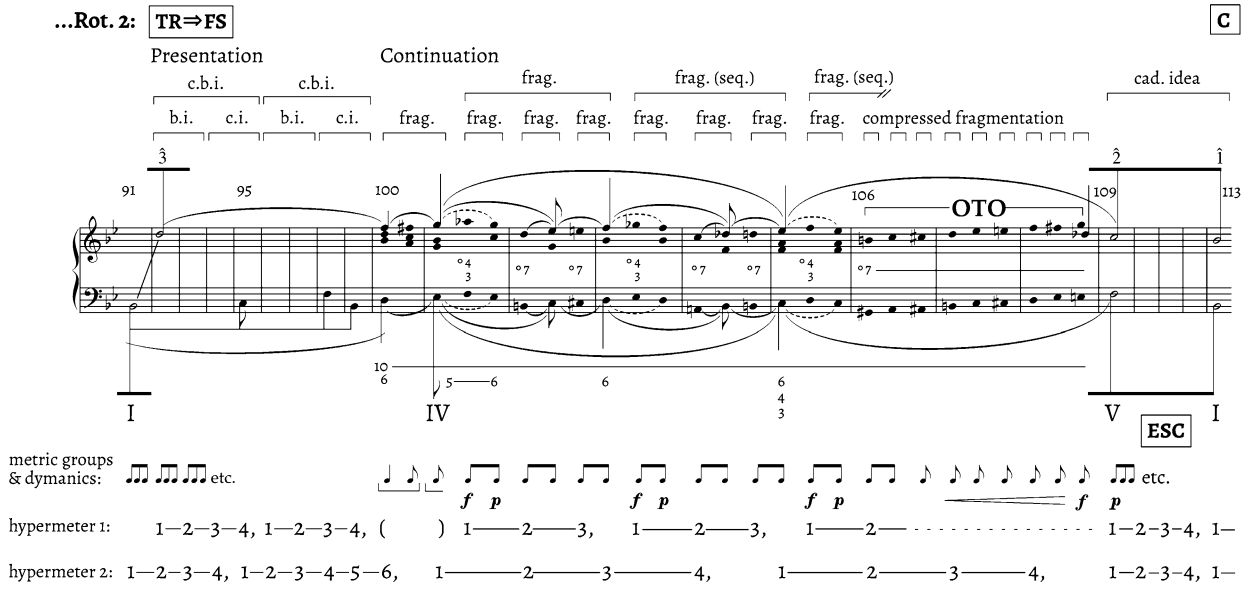
The process of intensification begins with a relatively stable compound presentation (mm. 92–99).[10] This expands tonic harmony and, like the corresponding passage in the exposition (mm. 19–26), is characterized by symmetry between two- and four-measure units (see the form-functional analysis above the system). This symmetry corresponds to multiple repetitions and provides the foundation for emphasizing the deviations that follow. The tension then gradually intensifies during the compound continuation, whose expanded dimensions delay the arrival at the ESC. The extended fragmentation (mm. 100–108), which includes the OTO, prolongs the structural pre-dominant and is unified throughout by parallel tenths between the outer voices (see the *10* marking below m. 100 and the subsequent horizontal line).[11] As in the exposition, a one-

[8] Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, 51–64) identify the continuous exposition in sonata form as lacking MC and S, proposing two subtypes. In the first subtype, the *Expansion-Section*, the transition (TR) begins after a P-idea but evolves into a restless *Fortspinnung* (FS) module (TR⇒FS), where motives "spin out" continuously without pausing for the MC and the subsequent launch of S, ultimately reaching the EEC. Hepokoski and Darcy discuss three strategies for TR⇒FS, with the first involving FS progressing beyond the S-point without the listener noticing. They regard this strategy as a pure instance of a continuous exposition, noting its rarity among the celebrated works of later eighteenth-century composers (53–54). Since the TR⇒FS in the second movement of Mozart's Quintet in E♭ Major follows this strategy, in both the exposition and the recapitulation, the circumstances surrounding the arrival at the ESC may be regarded as exceptional.

[9] Lauri Suurpää (2022) discusses the continuous exposition in Mozart's late chamber-music slow movements and analyzes the exposition in the Quintet, K. 452.

[10] The following abbreviations are used in the presentation section of Example 6: b.i. = basic idea; c.i. = contrasting idea; c.b.i. = compound basic idea.

[11] The parallel tenths between the outer voices in mm. 100–108 (Ex-



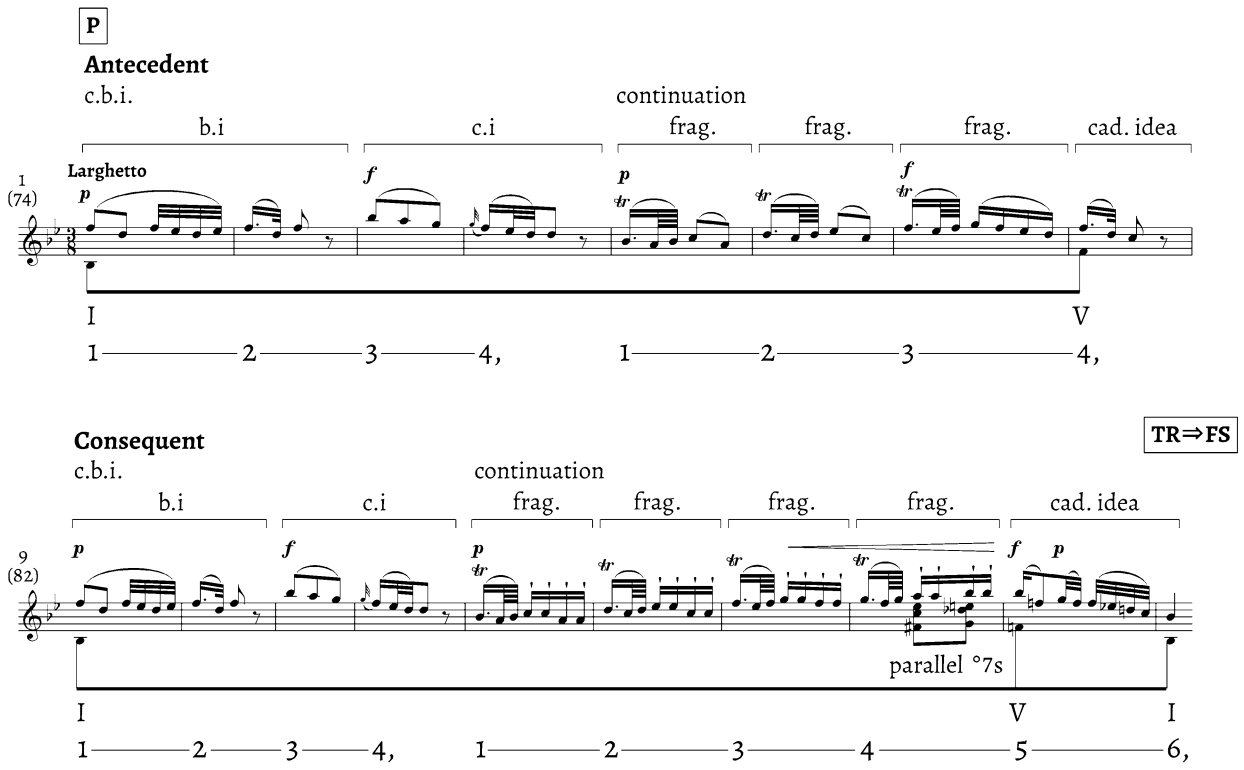
Example 6. Analysis of Mozart, Quintet in E♭ Major for Piano and Winds, K. 452, II, mm. 91–113.

and-a-half-measure fragment (mm. 100–101) is followed by shorter fragments of a diminished-seventh chord and its resolution (mm. 101–105). Two-chord units, each comprising a diminished-seventh chord and its resolution, occur frequently throughout the movement, thus forming a motive likely well ingrained in the listener's perception. However, here, the rapid eighth-note alternation creates a particularly fast harmonic rhythm that heightens tension. Unlike the fragmentation in the exposition, which comprises only four such short fragments (mm. 28–30), eight short fragments appear here, grouped into three sequential patterns (the third is truncated), forming three higher-level fragments. The tension that intensifies throughout the sequence culminates in the OTO (mm. 106–108). The third truncated sequential pattern (mm. 105–106), like its predecessors, opens with short fragments, each commencing with a diminished-seventh chord. However, in the second short fragment (at the beginning of m. 106), the initial diminished-seventh chord fails to resolve and instead ascends to a parallel diminished-seventh chord. This is the first ascent in the OTO, which unfolds as a chromatic ascending melodic sequence of nine parallel diminished-seventh chords (notated with varying enharmonic spellings), constituting compressed fragmentation. In the absence of a cadential trill or other rhetorical gesture, the OTO functions as a distinctive marker signaling the arrival of the ESC, the movement's most structurally significant cadence.

Hypermetric complexities further contribute to the intensification process outlined above, shaping the listener's perception of the OTO. These are reflected in the three analytical lines below the system: *hypermeter 2* underlies the harmonic rhythm in the presentation and corresponds with the notated meter in the continuation, while various tension-enhancing disturbances are revealed through the *metric groups & dynamics* and *hypermeter 1*. The presentation, while relatively stable, already exhibits hypermetric nonconcurrence between the outer voices. Hypermeter 2—comprising two hypermeasures (1–2–3–4 and 1–2–3–4–5–6)—is supported by the bass, with harmonic rhythm articulated mostly in two-measure units, and by its parallelism with the two preceding hypermeasures (Example 7, mm. 82–91). In contrast, hypermeter 1 (Example 6)—consisting of two quadruple hypermeasures followed by an additional measure in parentheses—is supported by the soprano and by the formal functions indicated above the system.[12] In the fragmentation section, the steady rhythmic surface intensifies hypermetric ambigu-

ample 6) operate on three levels: (1) the foreground level, shown by all soprano–bass pairings in these measures; (2) a middleground-level sequence in mm. 100–105, with one note per measure indicated by quarter and eighth note durations (in the soprano: G_5–$E♭_5$ in mm. 101–102, F_5-$D♭_5$ in mm. 103–104, $E♭_5$ in m. 105); and (3) a linear progression in a deeper middleground level, indicated by quarter notes and outer slurs (G_5 in m. 101, F_5 in m. 103, $E♭_5$ in m. 105, $D♭_5$ in m. 108, C_5 in m. 109).

[12] Such hypermetric nonconcurrence between outer voices is an acknowledged feature in Mozart's style (see Kamien 1993). The two hypermetric interpretations in Example 6 can be related to metrical preference rules that William Rothstein (1995, 172–173) adopts from Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff (1983, 347–348). For larger levels of meter (i.e., hypermeter), he singles out two such rules as especially

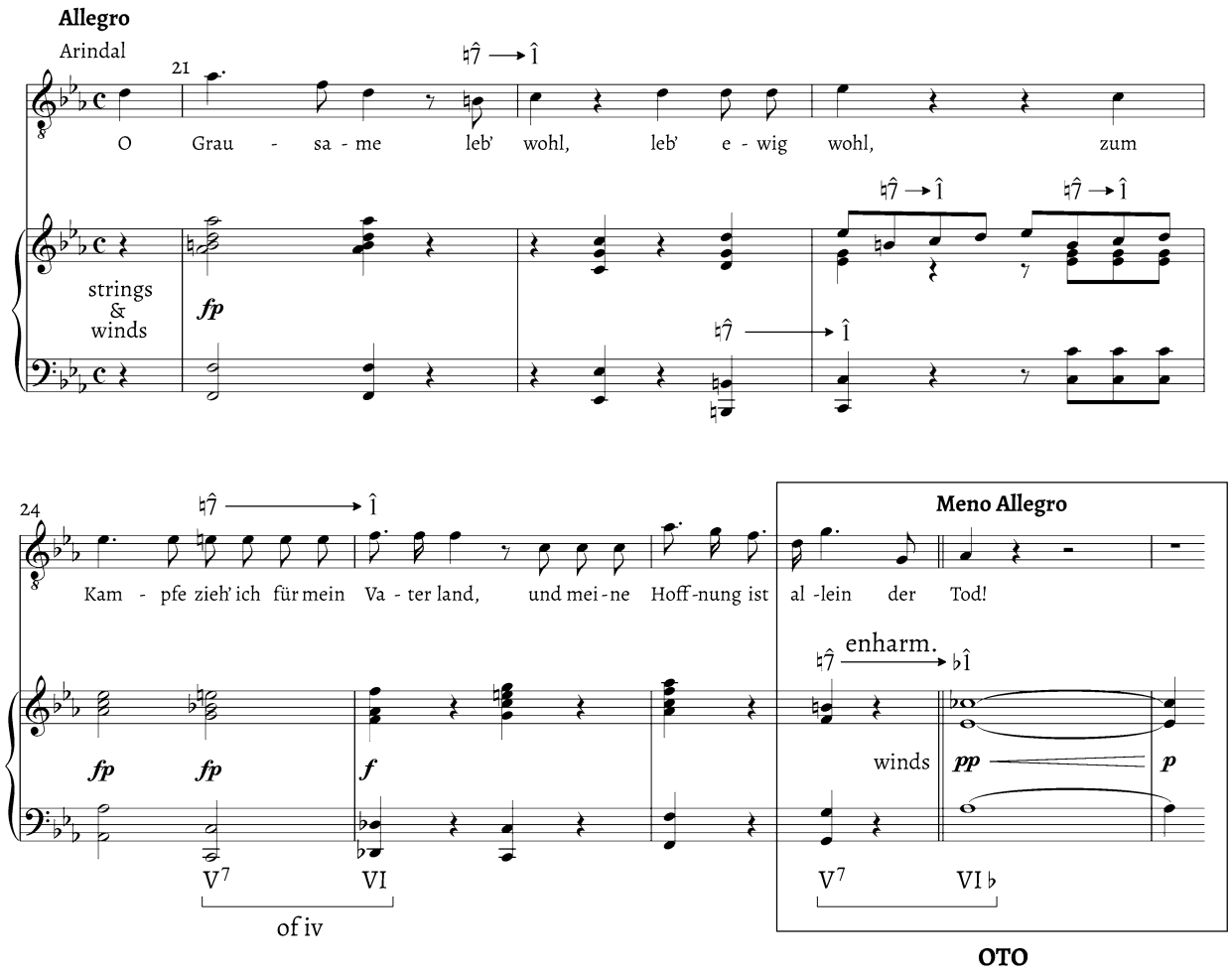


Example 7. Analysis of P of Rots. 1 and 2 in Mozart, Quintet in E♭ Major for Piano and Winds, K. 452, II, mm. 1–18 / 74–91.

ity. Hypermeter 2 in this passage outlines two quadruple hypermeasures, aligning with the notated $\frac{3}{8}$ meter. The notated meter is supported by nearly consistent one-measure slurs in the wind instruments during the sequential fragmentation (Example 5, mm. 101–105) and in the piano's left hand during the OTO (Example 5, mm. 106–108). In contrast, metric groups & dynamics support the intensified hypermeter (1–2–3, 1–2–3, 1–2 . . .), shown in hypermeter 1 (Example 6, mm. 101–106). The pairs of diminished-seventh chords and their resolutions function as compressed $\frac{2}{8}$ measures, each pair forming a hyperbeat, with *forte* accents on the second eighth note of mm. 101, 103, and 105 operating as hypermetric downbeats. The OTO then marks the peak of this tension: its uninterrupted succession of parallel chords, accompanied by a *crescendo* that leads to nowhere, obscures the metric organization and intensifies the sense of hypermetric disorientation. This can be heard as a brief *hypermetrical tunnel* in John Paul Ito's (2013, 63) sense: hypermetric orientation is effectively suspended, making it difficult to construct a larger-scale temporal orientation or to anticipate the resumption of more regular phrase structure, an experience Ito associates with William Rothstein's (1989, 42–43) metaphor of holding one's breath. Clarity is restored in m. 109 with the return of a stable $\frac{3}{8}$ meter (shown in Example 6 under metric groups & dynamics) and the reestablishment of quadruple hypermeter, as shown in hypermeter 1.

The impact of the OTO in the E♭-Major Quintet is reinforced by additional contextual factors within the movement and beyond. First, the OTO's rarity exceeds the boundaries of the movement itself. It is the only instance of nine parallel diminished-seventh chords across the entire three-movement quintet, Mozart's chamber music repertoire, and conceivably his entire oeuvre. Moreover, within the tonal repertoire of the common practice period, melodic sequences of parallel diminished-seventh chords occur more frequently in descending motion—as in the Bach Gigue (Examples 3b and 4)—than in the ascending motion heard here. The stylistic rarity of this OTO significantly contributes to its markedness, rendering it particularly striking for the informed listener. Second, although unique in its occurrence, this OTO is nevertheless anticipated by earlier material within the movement. The OTO, which constitutes the final appearance of a diminished-seventh chord, is prepared by the first occurrence of paral-

weighty: *the rule of harmonic rhythm*, according to which strong beats in the meter tend to coincide with changes of harmony, here supporting hypermeter 2, and *the rule of congruence*, favoring congruence between melodic groups and their metrical time spans (Rothstein 2011, 97), here supporting the alignment of hypermeter 1 with melodic groups in the soprano.



Example 8. OTO in Wagner, Die Feen. *Piano Score of Act I, Finale, mm. 20–28.*

lel diminished-seventh chords, as well as the material that prefigures these chords. The P section, shown in Example 7, is constructed as a compound period (this analysis is applicable to both the exposition and the recapitulation). Its components closely parallel those of the compound sentence in the recapitulation's TR⇒FS, discussed above: (1) the compound period begins with a c.b.i., followed by sequential fragmentation; (2) in the consequent, the figuration intensifies and extends the continuation in relation to the c.b.i.; and (3) most notably, against the backdrop of a *crescendo* concluding the fragmentation, the final fragment signals the arrival at the cadence through two ascending parallel diminished-seventh chords. This precedent and the OTO are the only passages in the movement that feature parallel diminished-seventh chords.

3. An OTO at a Narrative Hinge

The next example shows how an OTO may function as a formal and structural marker within a textual and dramatic context. A case in point appears in Richard Wagner's debut opera, *Die Feen*. In the first act, the mortal heir to the throne, Arindal, resides in the fairy realm with the half-fairy Ada, who has renounced her immortality for the sake of their life together. Yet their union is bound by a taboo: Arindal must never inquire into Ada's origins. The fairies, seeking to end the relationship, manipulate Arindal's perception and emotional state, ultimately provoking him to break this prohibition. Consequently, he is cast out of the fairy realm into a barren, desolate wilderness. Wandering in grief and unaware of the magical forces behind his exile, he is eventually found by friends who inform him of his father's death and persuade him to return to the troubled kingdom he had abandoned eight years earlier. Left alone, Arindal falls into an enchanted sleep at the outset of the act's Finale—a moment that marks a transition back to the realm of the fairies, where Ada reappears, torn between her love for him and the cost of her sacrifice.

Arindal's transition from earthly reality back to the realm of the fairies is depicted in Example 8, which

presents the final six measures before he falls asleep, as he sings, "O cruel one, farewell, farewell forever, I go to fight for my homeland, and my only hope is death!" The text "zieh' ich für mein Vaterland" (I go to my homeland) in mm. 24–25, which refers to an earthly destination, is set to a conventional minor-key deceptive cadence. Arindal sings the local leading tone, E♮$_4$, and resolves it to F$_4$ (♮$\hat{7}$–$\hat{1}$). Immediately afterward, the text "und meine Hoffnung ist allein der Tod!" (and my only hope is death!), signifying a transition beyond mortal reality, culminates in a different minor-key deceptive cadence, framed in mm. 26–28. This cadence introduces Arindal's unexpected falling asleep, resolving V^7 to a minor submediant on the word "Tod!" (death!). The resolution is strikingly unconventional for a minor key. In this progression, the leading tone, B♮$_4$, is "resolved" to its enharmonic doppelganger, C♭$_5$ (♮$\hat{7}$–♭$\hat{1}$). In other words, the minor VI does not include the tonic tone, $\hat{1}$, but, rather, the paradoxical ♭$\hat{1}$, which is the enharmonically reinterpreted leading tone after being "resolved into itself."[13] This deceptive cadence is a distinct OTO. The sense of surprise generated by the unconventional resolution is further heightened by its contrast with the four preceding conventional resolutions of the leading tone B♮ to the tonic C (♮$\hat{7}$–$\hat{1}$) in mm. 21–23: first in Arindal's vocal line on the word "Leb'wohl" (farewell), then three more times in the orchestra.

As with the OTO in the second movement of the Mozart E♭-Major Quintet, the rarity of the OTO in *Die Feen* is not confined to its formal context. It is the sole instance of such a deceptive cadence, not only in the first act but across the entire opera. It is fair to say that such an OTO is extremely rare within the tonal repertoire of the common practice period. This scarcity amplifies the OTO's distinctiveness, making it especially striking to listeners attuned to its uncommon harmonic character.

Inessa Wagner-Rubinstein (2016, 21–25) contextualizes this exceptional deceptive cadence within Wagner's broader exploration of states of "betweenness" in his operas—transitional states of consciousness such as falling asleep, awakening, dreaming, and being under a spell. This OTO highlights a harmonically adventurous gesture and, simultaneously, functions as a structural hinge between narrative realms: from earthly reality to magical space and from waking life to enchanted suspension. In this dual role—as musical anomaly and dramatic signpost—it functions as a formal pivot within the opera's narrative.

[13] Frank Lehman (2014, 88–89) discusses this type of deceptive cadence as a SLIDE-based dominant transformation in Franz Schubert's Fantasia for Piano Four Hands in F Minor, D. 940. Schubert employs this progression to both enter and exit the development section (mm. 63–66 and 89–92, respectively) in the sonata-form "movement" opening the four combined quasi-symphonic movements.

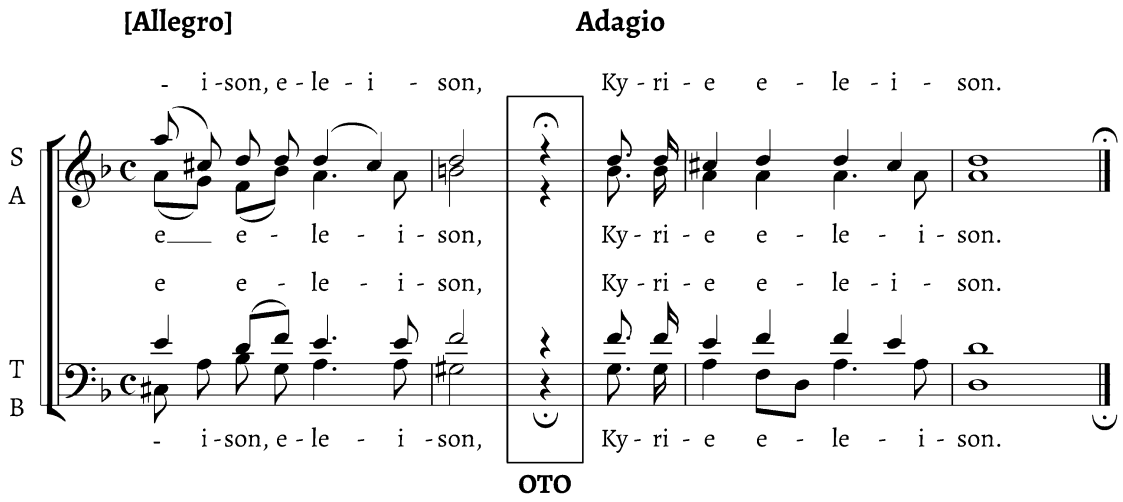
4. Absence and Omission

The preceding discussion has examined two sources of marked singularity: motivic deviation and parametric extremity. Examples of deviation include altered intervals within or between expected melodic figuration patterns, as in Bach's Prelude, and a change in expected melodic contour, as in Bach's Invention. Extremity-based cases emerge within a tightly constrained motivic context, such as the parallel diminished-seventh chords in Bach's Gigue, or arise in more complex formal and textural settings, as in the parallel diminished-seventh chords in Mozart's E♭-Major Quintet or the exceptional deceptive cadence in Wagner's opera.

In addition to deviation and extremity, a third source of marked singularity is absence or omission. This category is less intuitive, as analysis typically focuses on what is present rather than what is lacking. Nevertheless, the notion of absence is not foreign to music theory. Schenkerian theory, for example, incorporates *implied tones* and *substitutions*, as well as the *auxiliary cadence*, in which the tonic is absent at the beginning.[14] Absence becomes perceptually salient against a background of established expectations. Much like a motivic deviation, it can stand out through contrast with multiple repetitions—for instance, with the omission of a pervasively recurring motive. Absence and omission thus function within the context of a cognitive principle that links seemingly unrelated phenomena, including the suppression of a highly recurring motive; a pause in the musical texture; or, in rotational designs, the omission of a recurring theme from a single rotation. Interestingly, similarities between extreme values—such as the very long or the very high—may be more readily perceived than the kinship between different types of absence.

The most salient absence is silence against a continuous sonic surround. Such a general pause (GP) can function as a disruption aimed at creating enhanced tension. For example, in the Kyrie from Mozart's Requiem in D Minor, K. 626 (Example 9), a deceptive V–vii°^{7}/V progression—itself an OTO analogous to the exceptional deceptive resolution in Example 8—precedes a GP, which then resembles the abrupt halt of a moving train. The GP, located in the antepenultimate measure, marks the sole absence of sound in the entire movement, occurring after restless, continuous fugal activity. Its dramatic effect draws the listener's attention toward the concluding cadence that immediately follows. Such an acoustic silence, occurring after dense contrapuntal motion and a harmonically charged deceptive

[14] Examples of analytic studies that foreground nonoccurrence as structurally meaningful include Rothstein (1991) on implied tones within a Schenkerian framework and Mirka (2012) on absent cadences in Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 64, analyzed through eighteenth-century rhetorical and formal theory.



Example 9. Choir from Mozart, Requiem in D Minor, K. 626, Kyrie, mm. 97–100.

resolution, is a perceptually saturated span: the withdrawal of sound affords both the retrospective digestion of the preceding fugal process and a continuation in the listener's inner hearing that projects the imminent cadential goal across the gap, rather than functioning as a neutral break in the texture (Margulis 2007, 245–246, 252–253, 260).[15]

A *suppressed note* (Wagner 2004) is the absence of a specific pitch class (PC) from a passage.[16] Naphtali Wagner discusses pentatonicism in The Beatles' songs and demonstrates that it was obtained by leaving two "holes" in a seven-note diatonic scale. He further conjectures that listeners may be unaware of a missing PC, yet its (re)appearance has a powerful effect and might attract special attention. Composers may heighten the effect using other parameters, for instance by placing the reintroduced PC on a strong beat, repeating it continuously, associating it with a significant word in sung music, or aligning it with a pitch climax.

An OTO derived from a suppressed note in the first movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Sonata in G Major op. 14, no. 2, is shown in Example 10. At the end of the development, the retransition concludes with a DPP. Here, the twelve PCs are labeled with the integers 0–11, with G as 0. The DPP is divided into two overlapping sections: from m. 107 to the onset of m. 115, and mm. 115–124 (framed in Example 10). The first section features rapid scalar passages that include all PCs except PC1 and PC10. Out of the 158 onsets in this section, the tonic note G appears 30 times (19%), more frequently than any other PC, including the dominant D (26 times, 16%) and the leading tone F♯ (23 times, 15%). Conversely, in the second section, Beethoven suppresses G entirely while including all other PCs, each labeled at its first appearance. Rather than weakening G's representation in working memory, its suppression makes the absence itself perceptually salient and heightens the expectation for a tonic arrival. Its reappearance on the first strong beat of the recapitulation (m. 125) therefore lands with heightened force. Notably, this framed section is the only formal unit in the movement where G is suppressed, and it is the only extended dominant-function passage that omits the local tonic note. As such, this is an OTO that fulfills a similar role to those previously discussed: highlighting a structurally significant and formally pivotal moment.

5. OTO Constellations in Bach's C-Minor Fugue

Bach's Fugue in C Minor, *WTC I*, BWV 847, incorporates several OTOs that signal arrivals at significant structural and formal points (Example 11; the OTOs are enclosed in frames).[17] This final analysis serves as a summary in that it includes previously identified OTO types and an additional OTO derived from the absence of a motive. The C-Minor Fugue features a binary division based on motivic criteria, consisting of the two almost equal sections A and

[15] Ellen T. Harris (2005) discusses silences at cadential locations under the label pre-cadential silence, focusing on Handel; Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis (2007, 260) adopts this label for similar general pauses and extends the discussion to their perceptual affordances in a broader repertoire.

[16] Similar theories were developed by James M. Baker (2003) and Henry Burnett and Roy Nitzberg (2007).

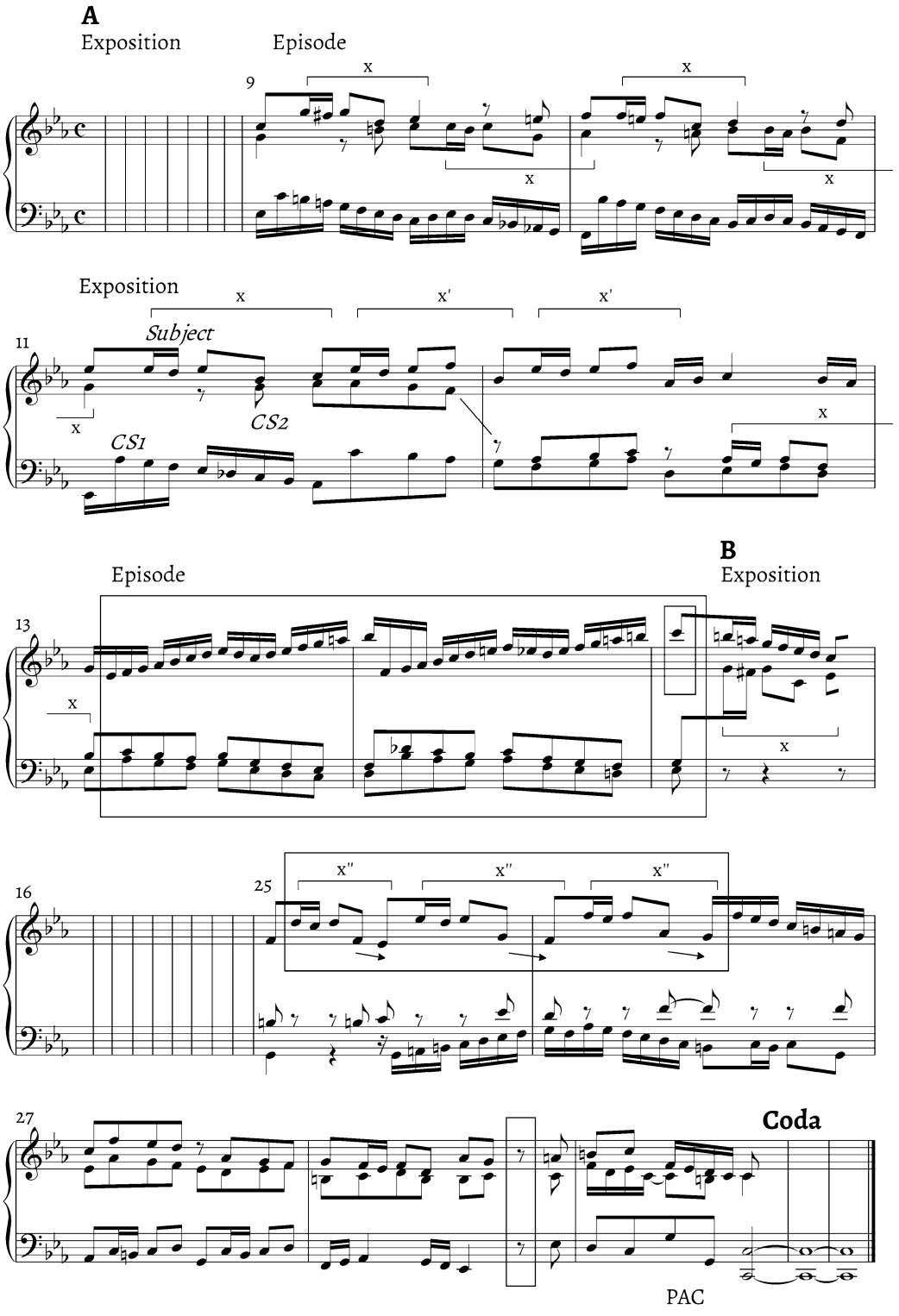
[17] The OTOs discussed in this section were first brought to my attention by Dalia Cohen.



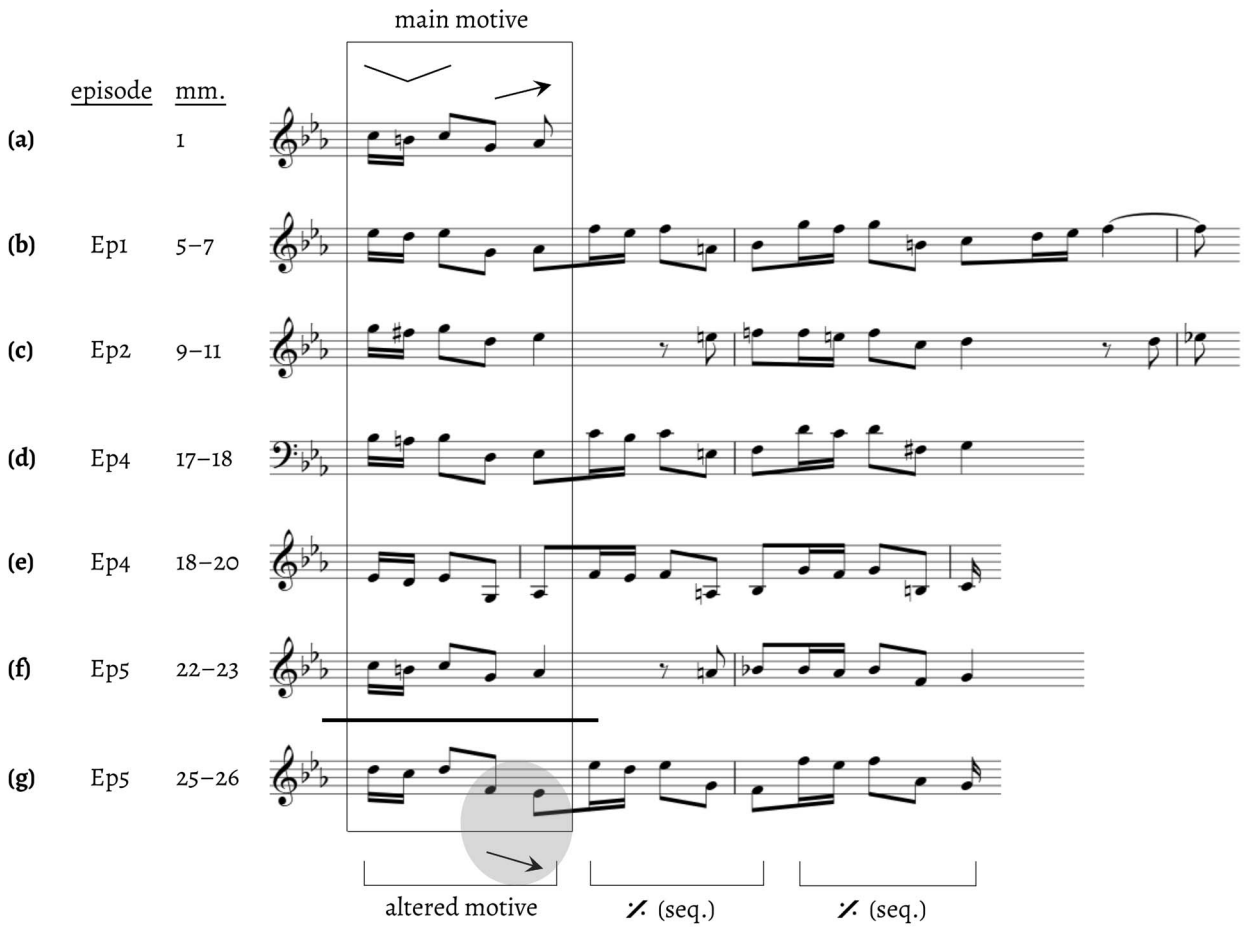
Example 10. Pitch-class analysis (0–11) of Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 10 in G Major op. 14, no. 2, I, mm. 107–125.

B (14 and 14.5 measures, respectively), followed by a coda.[18] In addition, the Fugue exhibits remarkable thematic unity, achieved by the episodes' maximal adherence to the thematic material of the subject and two countersubjects (CS1

[18] The binary division based on motivic criteria in the C-Minor Fugue features inherent nonconcurrence with a ternary division based on tonal criteria (as proposed in Schenker [1926] 1996, 33). The symmetry between sections A and B arises not only from the consistent alternation of theme entries and episodes (Ep) but also from specific parallelism at their beginnings: *comes*–Ep1–*dux*–Ep2 (mm. 3–11) in section A is mirrored by *comes*–Ep1′–*dux*–Ep2′ (mm. 15–24) in section B. Among the fugues of the *WTC*, binary symmetry is a feature of Book I, where it is found in six of its twenty-four fugues. The E-Minor Fugue is the most symmetrical (mm. 1–19 versus mm. 20–38): every unit in its first section is balanced by a corresponding unit in the second section (the overall equilibrium is broken by the coda, mm. 39–42). Prominent symmetry exists in the Fugues in C Minor (detailed in this article) and B Major (mm. 1–18 versus mm. 18–33). The D-Minor Fugue features symmetry between the second halves of its two sections (mm. 10–21 versus mm. 31–43). Weaker symmetry is featured in the Fugues in E♭ Major (mm. 3–12 versus mm. 26–35) and C♯ Major (symmetry between beginning and ending: mm. 1–12 versus mm. 42–53).



Example 11. OTOs framed in a reduction of Bach, Fugue in C Minor, WTC I, *BWV 847.*



Example 12. Main motive at the beginning of episode in Bach, Fugue in C Minor, WTC I, *BWV 847.*

and CS2), and by the near-exhaustive use of triple counterpoint, as evidenced by the inclusion of five of the six possible permutations of triple counterpoint.[19] Consequently, the Fugue's main motive—marked as *x* in Example 11—is persistently present. In the expositions, this motive opens the subject and recurs twice with altered contour (e.g., mm. 11–13, soprano: x–x'–x'); it then reappears in immediate succession at the conclusion of CS2 (e.g., mm. 12–13, middle voice: *x*). Within the episodes, *x* frequently undergoes sequential patterning, as in the upper voices of mm. 9–11.

Toward the end of section B, Bach employs two OTOs of the types discussed above to signal the approach of the PAC at m. 29 (Example 11). The first OTO is the sequence of x''—a newly altered pitch contour of the main motive—appearing in mm. 25–26 and concluding the fifth episode. Example 12 illustrates this deviation. The main motive that opens the fugue's subject (Example 12a) is constructed from a lower neighbor pattern followed by a descending leap and an ascending step. This patterning recurs at the beginning of each subject entry and is consistently maintained in the episodic melodies (Example 12b–f), except for the last one (Example 12g). Here, the descending leap is followed by a descending rather than an ascending step, as indicated by the gray circle. Bach shifted this altered motive upward twice, thus creating a three-pattern sequence. Five factors highlight the deviation from the main motive's standard contour and contribute to the tension it creates. First, the melody in Example 12g is the only one in which the opening main motive starts with D, whereas all other melodies (Example 12b–f) start with chord tones of the tonic triad: C, E♭, or G. Second, only Example 12g begins with a lower neighbor pattern at the interval of a major second rather than a minor second. Third, the deviation in Example 12g occurs on the motive's last note, thereby increasing the listener's

[19] The realization of five out of the six possible permutations is considered extensive. Harrison (1988) analyzed two rare cases of all six possible permutations in Bach's triple counterpoint pieces: the fugue-like D-Major Sinfonia for Clavier, BWV 789, and the F♯-Major Fugue, *WTC II*, BWV 882. The latter is not a triple counterpoint of subject and countersubjects, but rather of a non-thematic short unit appearing in episodes 1 and 3.

sense of surprise. Fourth, the altered contour increases tension by eliminating the compensatory ascending step that typically follows a descending leap. And fifth, the polyphony is almost suspended in the first half of m. 25 due to the long pause in the lower voice and the brief pause in the inner voice (see Example 11).[20]

The subsequent OTO in the C-Minor Fugue immediately precedes the cadence, with all three voices pausing simultaneously for one eighth note in m. 27 (Example 11). This is the only instance in the fugue where sound is absent. A GP is a rarity in the fugues of the *WTC*, appearing in only four other fugues;[21] this infrequency enhances the element of surprise for the informed listener. Although GPs are inherently salient, particularly when functioning as OTOs, the brevity of the silence here reduces its perceptual prominence. As in the GP near the end of the double fugue in Mozart's Requiem (Example 9), this sudden halt in sound may likewise evoke the image of pulling the emergency brake of a train. However, unlike that example, here in the C-Minor Fugue, the momentum persists into the cadential passage in the following measure, which liquidates the thematic material and culminates in a structural PAC and an exceptional coda.[22]

The two OTOs jointly articulate the momentum toward the cadence in the C-Minor Fugue. The first OTO (Example 11, mm. 25–26) sets the stage for the cadence, and the following subject in the bass (mm. 26–28) delays it, increasing the listener's anticipation. Since the bass cannot simultaneously carry the subject and function as cadential, the interruption caused by the second OTO (GP) becomes necessary, allowing the bass to take a breath before resuming its role as cadential foundation.

Bach uses OTOs to signal not only the end of section B but also the end of section A. The final episode of section A (Example 11, mm. 13–15) constitutes an OTO due to the absence of the main motive (x, x', or x''). The suppression of the highly recurring motive across an entire episode stands out against its repetition throughout the entire fugue. While listeners may not initially notice the motive's absence, its reappearance at the next subject entry (m. 15, middle voice) draws attention and retrospectively highlights the omission. Although this episode omits the subject motive, the soprano inverts the bass of mm. 9–11—material that derives from CS1's opening (m. 11, lower voice)—thereby preserving motivic continuity with the countersubject. The texture of this episode also qualifies as an OTO, as it features a rhythmically uniform texture with parallel thirds in the lower voices, thus deviating from the fugue's characteristic polyphonic texture. The two ascending scale passages in the upper voice lead to an OTO resulting from extremity: C_6, the fugue's pitch climax in m. 15. This climax is located precisely at the boundary between the two sections of the thematic binary design. Placing a pitch climax in the exact middle is a rare compositional treatment of an already rare stimulus. Despite its inherent straightforward salience, the pitch climax has a weak structural status, as it is supported by a six-three apparent tonic.[23]

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that OTOs can play a vital role as structural and formal markers within diverse musical works drawn from the common practice period. Far from being incidental anomalies, OTOs—including deviations in motivic contour, exceptional harmonic progressions, extreme pitch events, and strategic absences—function as perceptually prominent signposts that highlight formal boundaries, cadential moments, and narrative transitions. OTOs may result from compositional strategies that manipulate presence and absence, illuminating musical elements that would otherwise remain implicit or taken for granted.

The rarity and uniqueness of OTOs amplify their perceptual impact, contributing to the listener's experience of

[20] Interestingly, Bach's fugue-like D-Major Sinfonia for Clavier, BWV 789, which also features triple counterpoint, interchanges the relationship between the regular and altered motives in the C-Minor Fugue: the Fugue's altered motive (x'') is similar to the Sinfonia's regular motive, and vice versa. The main motives of the Fugue and the Sinfonia share the same rhythm but differ slightly in contour: in the Sinfonia, the first three notes move in ascending steps rather than outlining a lower neighbor pattern, and after the downward leap, the final two notes feature a descending rather than an ascending step. This patterning governs the Sinfonia; Bach deviates from it three times in an "episode" by altering the motive's ending to an ascending step (lower voice in mm. 15–16 and m. 17; middle voice in m. 18).

[21] GPs appear in four other fugues of the *WTC*: in *WTC I*, the A-Minor Fugue (mm. 80 and 82); and in *WTC II*, the E-Minor Fugue (m. 70), G-Minor Fugue (mm. 73–74 and 78–79), and A♭-Major Fugue (m. 46).

[22] This is the only coda in the forty-eight fugues of the *WTC* featuring a subject entry *and* a quasi-monodic texture. A subject entry in a coda is stylistically rare. Additionally, throughout this fugue, we have become accustomed to hearing the subject with two other independent voices simultaneously; however, here the independence of the lower voices is drastically reduced, and the subject sounds almost naked in the upper voice. Only two other fugues in *WTC I* have the subject in the coda over a pedal point (*WTC II* has none): the C-Major Fugue (mm. 24–26) and the A-Minor Fugue (mm. 83–87, with four incomplete entries, two of which are inverted). In these two fugues the polyphony is kept in the coda's upper voices, in contrast to what occurs in the C-Minor Fugue.

[23] This chord is the sixth of III^{5-6} (III being the entry in E♭ major, mm. 11–13), and it is reinterpreted as iv^6 in G minor.

formal clarity and expressive intensity. As such, they deserve systematic consideration alongside more established analytical categories that address types of repetition. Integrating OTOs into structural, formal, and motivic analyses enriches our understanding of musical organization as a dynamic interplay between expectation and surprise.

Future research might explore how OTOs function in repertoires beyond the Western tonal tradition, where compositional strategies and listener expectations may vary significantly. For example, in post-tonal practice—from minimalist saturation of repetition to deliberate avoidance of recurrence—single breaches can likewise operate as salient formal markers. Mapping where such singularities articulate points of closure, sectional boundaries, or narrative pivots would test the broader applicability of this framework. Additionally, empirical studies of OTO perception could elucidate how listeners experience the affective and cognitive effects of these unique occurrences. Ultimately, integrating deviation, extremity, and omission as sources of marked singularity broadens the scope of formal analysis and clarifies how singular events articulate form and guide listening.

References

Almén, Byron. 2008. *A Theory of Musical Narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Baker, James M. 2003. "Chromaticism, Form, and Expression in Haydn's String Quartet Op. 76, No. 6." *Journal of Music Theory* 47 (1): 41–101.

Beach, David. 2008. "Bach's Partita No. 1 in B♭, BWV 825: Schenker's Unpublished Sketches with Commentary and Alternative Readings." *Music Theory Spectrum* 30 (1): 1–34.

Burnett, Henry, and Roy Nitzberg. 2007. *Composition, Chromaticism and the Developmental Process: A New Theory of Tonality*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Cambouropoulos, Emilios. 2009. "How Similar Is Similar?" *Musicae Scientiae* 13 (1 suppl): 7–24.

Eitan, Zohar. 1997. *Highpoints: A Study of Melodic Peaks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gjerdingen, Robert O. 2007. *Music in the Galant Style*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hanninen, Dora A. 2003. "A Theory of Recontextualization in Music: Analyzing Phenomenal Transformations of Repetition." *Music Theory Spectrum* 25 (1): 59–97.

Harris, Ellen T. 2005. "Silence as Sound: Handel's Sublime Pauses." *The Journal of Musicology* 22 (4): 521–558.

Harrison, Daniel. 1988. "Some Group Properties of Triple Counterpoint and Their Influence on Compositions by J. S. Bach." *Journal of Music Theory* 32 (1): 23–49.

Hatten, Robert S. 1994. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 2004. *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hepokoski, James A., and Warren Darcy. 2006. *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ito, John Paul. 2013. "Hypermetrical Schemas, Metrical Orientation, and Cognitive-Linguistic Paradigms." *Journal of Music Theory* 57 (1): 47–85.

Jeppesen, Knud. (1931) 1992. *Counterpoint: The Polyphonic Vocal Style of the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Dover Publications.

Kamien, Roger. 1993. "Conflicting Metrical Patterns in Accompaniment and Melody in Works by Mozart and Beethoven: A Preliminary Study." *Journal of Music Theory* 37 (2): 311–348.

Krumhansl, Carol L. 1990. *Cognitive Foundations of Musical Pitch*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lee, Ji Yeon. 2018. "Climax Structure in Late Romantic Opera." PhD diss., City University of New York.

Lehman, Frank. 2014. "Schubert's SLIDEs: Tonal (Non-)Integration of a Paradoxical Transformation." *Music Theory and Analysis* 1 (1–2): 61–100.

Lerdahl, Fred, and Ray Jackendoff. 1983. *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Margulis, Elizabeth Hellmuth. 2007. "Moved by Nothing: Listening to Musical Silence." *Journal of Music Theory* 51 (2): 245–276.

———. 2014. *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Meyer, Leonard B. 1989. *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mirka, Danuta. 2012. "Absent Cadences." *Eighteenth-Century Music* 9 (2): 213–235.

Rothgeb, John. 1971. "Design as a Key to Structure in Tonal Music." *Journal of Music Theory* 15 (1/2): 230–253.

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

———. 1991. "On Implied Tones." *Music Analysis* 10 (3): 289–328.

———. 1995. "Beethoven with and without Kunstgepräng': Metrical Ambiguity Reconsidered." In *Beethoven Forum 4*, edited by Christopher Reynolds, Lewis Lockwood, and James Webster, 165–193. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

———. 2011. "Metrical Theory and Verdi's Midcentury Operas." *Dutch Journal of Music Theory* 16 (2): 93–111.

Salzer, Felix, and Carl Schachter. (1969) 1989. *Counterpoint in Composition: The Study of Voice Leading*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Schenker, Heinrich. (1926) 1996. "The Organic Nature of Fugue as Demonstrated in the C Minor Fugue from

Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1." In *The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook, Vol. 2*, translated by Hedi Siegel, 31–54. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. (1932) 1969. *Five Graphic Music Analyses*. New York: Dover Publications.

Schoenberg, Arnold. 1967. *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. London: Faber and Faber.

Suurpää, Lauri. 2022. "Continuous Exposition in Mozart's Slow Chamber-Music Movements." *Music Analysis* 41 (3): 394–439.

Wagner, Naphtali. 2004. "Fixing a Hole in the Scale: Suppressed Notes in the Beatles' Songs." *Popular Music* 23 (3): 257–269.

Wagner-Rubinstein, Inessa. 2016. "'Betweenness' in Wagner's Works: Between Dreams and Reality, Between Sleep and Wakefulness." PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Zbikowski, Lawrence M. 1999. "Musical Coherence, Motive, and Categorization." *Music Perception* 17 (1): 5–42.

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 68–84

Sergei Taneev's Place in the Russian Functional Harmony Tradition

by Jeffrey Scott Yunek

Abstract. The progression of Hugo Riemann's functional harmonic theories in Russia is consistently described as going from the proto-functional theories in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's textbook in 1885 to a full embrace of Riemann's functional ideas by Georgy Catoire in his 1924 textbook. My research attempts to fill in this forty-year gap by establishing that Sergei Taneev—the lead music theorist at the Moscow Conservatory before Catoire—was teaching functional elements seen in both Rimsky and Riemann. To do so, I explore functional elements in Taneev's theory of unifying tonality, as well as statements from his own diaries and from his students that document his engagement with Riemann's texts. I conclude that Taneev was the first major figure to teach elements of functional analysis at the Moscow Conservatory and that Taneev serves as a significant intermediary figure between the proto-functional ideas of Rimsky and the full embrace of Riemann by Catoire.

Keywords and phrases: Sergei Taneev; functional theory; modulation; Russian music theory; Hugo Riemann.

Introduction

Every scholar who has researched the arrival of Riemannian functional analysis in Russia has noted that it is one of the most impactful and resonant theories in the history of Russian music theory (Boyarkina 2017; Carpenter 1983; Ewell 2020a; Starostin 2010, 2013). The progression of Hugo Riemann's theories in Russia is consistently described as going from the proto-functional theories in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's 1885 textbook to a full embrace of Riemann's functional ideas by Georgy Catoire in his 1924 textbook (Carpenter 1988, 577; Ewell 2020a, 62; Starostin 2010, 49). This conception has a nearly forty-year gap, which is surprising given that Riemann's *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre* (1893) was translated into Russian in 1901 (along with many of Riemann's other writings; see Boyarkina 2017). This lacuna raises the question: Were any prominent Russian music theorists studying and teaching functional analysis in this over twenty-year gap between Riemann's translations into Russian and the publication of Catoire's textbook?

An obvious person to look at is Sergei Taneev. According to a recent article by Ivan Starostin (2013, 22–23), Taneev was the main theoretical force at the Moscow Conservatory before Catoire. Taneev spent nearly thirty years teaching music theory at the conservatory before Catoire, became director of the conservatory at twenty-five, and was the beloved teacher of many famous Russian composers and theorists including Alexander Scriabin, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Reinhold Glière, and Boleslav Yavorsky (Brown 2001). Accordingly, there are multiple Russian books and articles dedicated to Taneev's teaching at the Moscow Conservatory (Starostin 2013, 2018; Korabel'nikova 1974; Protopopov 1947; Yavorsky 1987, 241–348). This admiration of Taneev is echoed by Western scholars such as Philip

Ewell, who writes, "Taneev, through his pedagogical activities, had a greater impact in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia than anyone else" (2019, [3.11]). Similarly, Gordon McQuere writes, "Taneev was at that time the dominant music theorist in Moscow and perhaps in all of Russia" (1983, 160n5). Furthermore, Taneev was connected to all the earliest figures in the Russian functional harmony tradition, including Rimsky, Catoire, and Yoel Engel, the main translator of Riemann's writings in Russia (Boyarkina 2017).

Despite these connections, most Russian and Western scholars do not associate Taneev with functional analysis. To be explored in depth later, many of the Russian scholars who specifically study Taneev's teaching of harmony never mention Taneev's teaching of function or Riemann in general (Korabel'nikova 1974; Fedorovna 2017; Starostin 2010, 2013, 2018). Instead, most scholars focus on Taneev's teaching of counterpoint (Segall 2014; Desbruslais 2015; Lukina 2020). However, Taneev himself explicitly refers to functional harmony in multiple places, including in his strict counterpoint book, in which he writes,

> In the free style the use of intervals is entirely different from that in the strict, and varies according to the harmonic context. At times their use is in agreement with the strict style, at other there is more or less departure, finally all connection with the strict style is broken, as harmonic function takes control. (1962, 299)

Taneev's engagement with functional theory is further supported by references to harmonic function by Taneev's close friend, Georgy Conus, who recounts the following about Taneev's instruction of Scriabin: "Young Scriabin composed the D-major Prelude Op. 11 in order to prove to his current (or former) harmony teacher that the forbidden progression of D–S is legitimate" (Mazel' 1978, 323).

Correspondingly, there are some Russian and Western scholars who connect Riemann's harmonic ideas to Taneev's *unpublished* theory of unifying tonality. This theory was developed by Taneev from 1898 to 1912, which lies between the harmony textbooks of Rimsky ([1885] 2014) and Catoire (1924). In this theory, Taneev explicitly uses parallel and relative relationships to extend harmonic function and stresses the importance of subdominant- and dominant-function harmony in establishing tonic. As I will show later, however, these references to Riemannian elements in the secondary literature either simply note correlations (Carpenter 1988, 442) or lack supporting evidence showing Taneev's engagement with Riemann's ideas (Arzamanov 1984; Zenkin 2022, 72).

In this paper, I strengthen the minority opinion that Taneev was the first major figure to teach elements of functional analysis at the Moscow Conservatory by expanding on current observations of Riemannian elements in Taneev's theory of unifying tonality, exploring Taneev's professional and theoretical connections to Rimsky and his proto-functional ideas, and exploring Taneev's engagement with Riemann's writings on functional harmony. Building on Ellon Carpenter's (1988, 442) and Fedor Arzamanov's (1984, 50) observations, I will show the Riemann-like elements in Taneev's analyses of unifying tonalities and connect them to Taneev's comments on the importance of tonic, subdominant, and dominant function in his writings (Taneev 1952, 246). Next, I will establish Rimsky's status as a proto-functional figure in the literature (Carpenter 1988, 577; Ewell 2020a, 61–62; Starostin 2010, 29), Taneev's professional relationship with Rimsky (Taneev 1952, 28–50), and how Taneev's teaching reflected Rimsky's proto-functional ideas. Finally, I will show that Taneev possessed, studied, and taught Riemann's harmonic theories, and I will show how the key relationships in Taneev's theory of unifying tonality closely correlate with the modulation tables in Riemann's *Systematische Modulationslehre als Grundlage der musikalischen Formenlehre* (henceforth *Systematic Theory of Modulation*, translated by Engel in 1898) in both content and theoretical reasoning. These new claims draw on two sources that are not often discussed in the literature: (1) Taneev's diaries, which relay that he possessed many of Riemann's writings and attended presentations on Riemann's harmonic system by Engel (Taneev 1981, 1982, 1985), and (2) Yavorsky's "Reminiscences of Sergei Ivanovich Taneev," which establishes that Taneev was distinct in his acceptance of Riemann at the conservatory, both in his use of Riemann's textbooks and endorsement of Riemann's inversional conception of minor (Yavorsky 1987, 241–348).[1] As a result of these findings, I conclude that Taneev was the first major figure to teach elements of functional analysis at the Moscow Conservatory and that he serves as an intermediary figure between the proto-functional ideas of Rimsky and the full embrace of Riemann by Catoire.

1. Current Literature on Taneev's Relation to Riemann

Although they acknowledge the significance of Taneev's teaching before Catoire, the primary Western scholars on Russian functional analysis have only explored how Rimsky's proto-functional theories proceeded to Catoire's adoption of Riemann's ideas. As recently as 2020, Ewell writes,

> Rimsky-Korsakov's *Harmony Textbook* was the first to group together families of chords based on common-tone relationship, which he did eight years before Riemann. Catoire's *Theoretical Course of Harmony* was the

[1] Since all the dates in the letters and diaries are originally written according to the Julian calendar, I have preserved the Julian calendar throughout to ensure that dates referenced in the diaries and letters correspond to the dates they were created.

> first to use the Riemannian designations T, D, and S in conjunction with harmonic analysis. (2020a, 61–62)

This echoes earlier statements made by Carpenter:

> Incipient functionalism in harmony had already entered Russian music theory through Rimsky-Korsakov's textbook, and thus Russian theorists were congenial to its acceptance. Catoire, though, was the first Russian theorist to adapt Riemann's approach to a practical, pedagogical use, and to publish textbooks based on it. (1988, 577)

Both of these scholars were well aware of Taneev's pedagogy and the progression of functional harmony in Russia. Carpenter is the main Western resource on Taneev's theory of unifying tonality (1983, 265–273), whereas Ewell recently discussed Taneev's teaching of Yavorsky (Ewell 2019, [3.11]–[4.8]) and Yavorsky's exposure to Riemann (Ewell 2019, [9.4]; 2020b). Despite Carpenter's (1988) claims that functionalism flowed from Rimsky to Catoire, she does note that Taneev's juxtaposition of subdominant and dominant in his (soon to be explored) theory of unifying tonality "may be related to" (442) the dualistic approaches of Moritz Hauptmann and Riemann.[2] As I suggest later, this similarity is more than coincidental and likely ties to Taneev's study of Riemann's functional writings.

This Rimsky–Catoire link in Western scholarship reflects most Russian accounts, including scholars who also studied Taneev's teaching at the conservatory. For instance, Starostin's recent article on the history of harmonic instruction at the Moscow Conservatory states,

> However, the general idea of the *Theoretical Course*—that is, the functional system of classical harmony—has a dual origin. Initially, it was adopted by Catoire (as a methodological principle) from his St. Petersburg teachers—Rimsky-Korsakov and Lyadov [. . .] and was subsequently developed by taking into account Riemann's theory.[3] (2010, 49)

Not only does Starostin reaffirm that the functional ideas of Rimsky flowed to Catoire, but he goes on to state that this is in opposition to what occurred during Taneev's tenure: "However, we must not forget that representatives of the Taneev tradition (as well as Lyadov's) chose very different paths in creativity, scholarship, and pedagogy" (50). Accordingly, Taneev is not mentioned as a teacher of functional analysis in most of the Russian writings on Taneev's teaching, including Lyudmila Korabel'nikova's *S.I. Taneev at the Moscow Conservatory* (1974), Leonid Sabaneev's *Remembrances of Taneev* (2003), Protopopov's *Memories of Sergei Ivanovich Taneev* (1947), and Starostin's other writings (2013, 2018).

Although there are some Russian scholars that claim a Riemannian influence on Taneev, they never substantiate their claims by showing Taneev's access to (or interest in) Riemann nor any detailed correlations between Taneev's analyses and Riemannian theory. The boldest claim is by Konstantin Zenkin, who states Taneev "considered himself a Riemannian" (2022, 72). However, the entire paragraph housing this claim lacks any citation. The closest citation comes in the following paragraph, which cites Starostin's 2018 article on Taneev's teaching of harmony.[4] However, this source only mentions Taneev's focus on the "functional T, D, and S triads" and never mentions Riemann (Starostin 2018, 6). Given Starostin's recently mentioned claim that the Taneev school taught differently than Rimsky and Catoire, it is hard to claim that Starostin's singular reference to T, D, and S meant to convey that Taneev employed Riemannian functional analysis—especially since this article never mentions Riemann. The other Russian scholar claiming a Riemannian influence is the main Russian source on Taneev's theory of unifying tonality, Arzamanov, who writes, "Taneev used the valuable tenets of Riemannian functional teaching in many aspects of this theory [of unified modulatory plans]" (1984, 50). However, the remainder of his discussion of modulatory plans never mentions Riemann again. Furthermore, none of Arzamanov's examples feature any distinctive Riemannian notation (e.g., Sp or ₮). More broadly, distinctive Riemannian notation is not found in any of the other primary or secondary sources featuring Taneev's analyses of unified modulatory plans (Belyaev 1927; Carpenter 1983; 1988; Taneev 1952).

In the following sections, I plan to overturn the broad consensus that Taneev did not incorporate Riemannian analysis into his teaching at the Moscow Conservatory. First, I build on previous discussions of Taneev's theory of unifying tonality to show how it reflects two major elements of Riemannian functional analysis: (1) the importance of both subdominant and dominant in harmonic progressions and (2) assigning chords function based on similar pitch-class content (Lill 2024, 8–16). I then explore Taneev's connection to two of the earliest figures in the Russian functional harmony tradition: Rimsky and Riemann (via Russian translations of the latter's works).[5]

[2] Carpenter's comment is limited to a single sentence, and she does not discuss Riemann again for another two chapters (1988, 520).

[3] All translations throughout the paper are my own unless they come from preexisting translations of entire works (e.g., G. Ackley Brower's translation of Taneev's *Convertible Counterpoint in the Strict Style* [Taneev 1962]).

[4] Zenkin inadvertently cites a different Starostin article (2010), but the inclusive pages and content match Starostin's 2018 article.

[5] As shown by Ellen Bakulina (2020), the writers of the "Brigade" textbook are significant figures in the later standardization of Russian Riemannian analysis. Although Starostin notes a connection between the teaching of Taneev's theory of modulatory plans and the "Brigade" textbook (2013, 14), a full examination of these links is outside the scope of this article.

A) Beethoven's Op. 10, No. 3, mm. 17–25.



B) Taneev's reduction (Belyaev 1927, 199, ex. 14).



Example 1. Correlation of Beethoven's op. 10, no. 3, III, mm. 17–25 to Taneev's reduction.

2. Riemannian Elements in Taneev's Unifying Tonality

The main sources that overview Taneev's theory of unifying tonality are Arzamanov (1984) and Carpenter (1983; 1988, 428–443). In turn, their explorations of Taneev's theory are primarily based on his letters to Nikolai Amani and Alexi Stanchinsky (Taneev 1952, 219–249) and Viktor Belyaev's secondhand account of Taneev's twelve-page notebook containing his analyses of Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonatas (Belyaev 1927). As the name suggests, the main element of the theory is that all keys are related to a unifying tonality. In this theory, related keys are defined as being either a diatonic triad or a commonly used chromatic chord within that unifying key.[6] These relationships are primarily shown through harmonic reductions. One of the clearest examples is his analysis of Beethoven's op. 10, no. 3, III, mm. 17–25 (Example 1), which reduces the score to a four-voice chorale.[7] Underneath the score, Taneev lists the tonicized keys with capital and lowercase letters to distinguish major and minor, respectively, with note names in the Germanic system (e.g., h = B minor). Each key is typically associated with two chords that are bracketed together: the first is the applied dominant and the second is the tonicized triad.[8] Belyaev describes how Taneev's analysis shows the unity amongst these keys: "[Example 1] demonstrates the dominant key playing the role of a unifying tonality. Here we have the keys of B minor, E major, and A major as representatives of II, V, and I in the key of A major, which is the dominant of the main key" (1927, 198–199). Accordingly, B minor, E major, and A major are part of a ii–V–I progression of the unifying tonality of A major (the dominant of the home key of D major).[9]

However, it is important to note that most of the keys referenced by Taneev are not what modern scholars would call modulations because they are often just resolutions of applied dominants. Looking at the previous example, B minor and E major occur within a falling fifths sequence featuring their applied dominants and fall well short of being considered strong subsidiary keys reinforced by perfect authentic cadences. Similarly, Taneev's analysis of Beethoven's op. 10, no. 3, II, mm. 34–43 features another example of applied chords, diminished-seventh chords in this case, resolving to major or minor triads (Example 2).[10]

The second type of example Taneev employs is a line graph, which underscores that a modulatory plan should tonicize both subdominant- and dominant-side keys before returning to tonic. From Taneev's archives, Arzamanov shows a graph that Taneev provided to his form students as a general outline for a modulatory plan for a development section in a C-major sonata (Example 3).[11]

As Arzamanov notes, Taneev displays the unifying tonality with a solid horizontal line in the middle and the progression of tonicizations with a dashed line. The

[6] I will later show how this definition reflects Riemann's correlation of key relationships and extended cadences in his *Systematic Theory of Modulation*, trans. Engel (1898).

[7] Taneev's reduction of Beethoven's op. 10, no. 3, III (Example 1) normalizes the bass register and largely ignores the right hand.

[8] The only common exception is the opening chord, which is often the main key of the movement (as seen in Example 2).

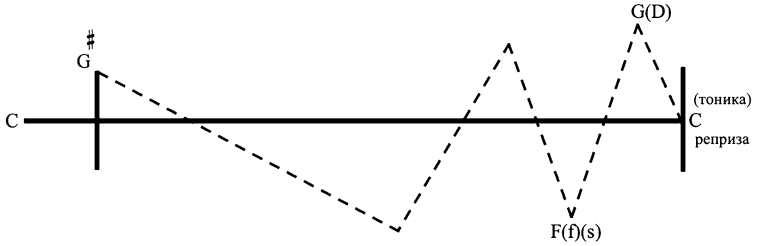
[9] The subsequent arrow to "D" refers to the last clause in Taneev's quote that A major is the dominant of D major (Belyaev 1927, 202). Taneev's diagrams consistently use arrows to show dominant to tonic relationships (see Belyaev 1927, exx. 5, 8, 11, 15, 16, 18, and 19.)

[10] Translation of Russian in Example 2: "Unifying tonality is D minor," and "A [major] equals the dominant of D minor." Note that the use of an apostrophe instead of a hard sign (ъ) is original to Belyaev.

[11] Translation of Russian in Example 3: "Tonic" is in parentheses above "reprise," signaling the recapitulation following this development section.



Example 2. Taneev's reduction of Beethoven's op. 10, no. 3, II, mm. 34–43 (Belyaev 1927, 198, ex. 13).



Example 3. Taneev's generic modulatory plan for a sonata development (Arzamanov 1984, 64).

vertical placement of the given tonicizations roughly aligns with their associated key signatures—with relatively sharp-/dominant-side tonalities placed higher and flat-/subdominant-side tonalities placed lower.[12] Although the middle keys are unannotated, Taneev specifies the three major functions at the end with (s), (D), and (*tonika*) and maps those designations on to their associated keys of F major and F minor, G major, and C major.

Accordingly, this graph appears to employ Riemann-like T, D, and S symbols to refer to chords with their corresponding functions and illustrates the importance of tonicizing subdominant- and dominant-function keys before proceeding to tonic. This resonance with functional analysis is supported by Carpenter, who notes,

> Taneev clearly depicts the interaction between the dominant and subdominant "spheres" in the development section, which culminates in their juxtaposition and the aspiration towards tonic. Taneev's "dualistic" approach may be related to similar approaches by Hauptmann and Riemann. (1988, 442)

More importantly, Taneev himself highlights the importance of tonic, dominant, and subdominant function in modulatory plans in his letter to Stanchinsky, writing,

> The prepared tonality acquires the greatest stability when it is surrounded by keys on both sides: the side of the subdominant and the side of the dominant, just as in a sequence of chords where the central (tonic) chord is a triad that is preceded by its subdominant and dominant. In this case, the prepared tonality serves the goal of the preceding movement of the harmony. [. . .] All these harmonic functions (*funktsii garmonii*) introduce life, unity, organic coherence, and meaning into a composition and are inseparably connected with the tonal system and cease to operate in its absence. (Taneev 1952, 246)

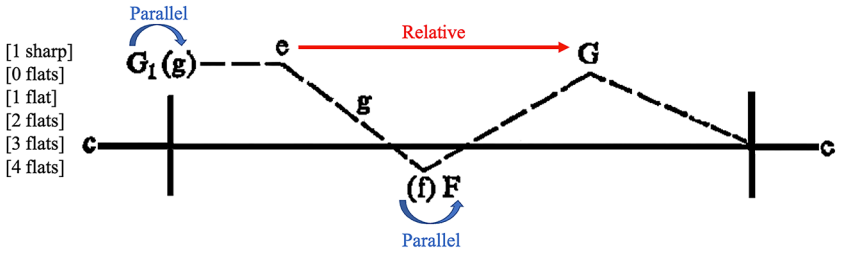
Furthermore, I suggest that Taneev's line graphs consistently highlight Riemann-like functional equivalencies through parallel and relative relationships. Taneev consistently refers to parallel relationships as *odnoimennogo* (i.e., of the same name) and relative relationships as the German cognate *parallelnogo* throughout both his letters to Amani and Stanchinsky (Taneev 1952, 219–249) and the footnotes of his Beethoven analyses relayed by Belyaev (1927). Looking at the previous line graph (Example 3), Taneev equates the parallel subdominant keys of F major and F minor even though their different key signatures would suggest different placements on the line graph. Accordingly, parallel keys are also placed on the same plane in his other line graphs, such as in his analysis of the development section in Beethoven, op. 13, I (Example 4).

Taneev also places the relative keys of E minor and G major on the same plane in the dominant sphere, which suggests that they both serve dominant function. In fact, in his letter to Stanchinsky, Taneev explicitly states that E minor is able to serve as a dominant in the key of C major because of its relative relationship to G major (Taneev 1952, 247). In this letter, Taneev comments on the tonicizations in Stanchinsky's Fugue no. 1:



> In this instance, the first harmony [i.e., E minor] is on the dominant side (relative to G major), whereas the

[12] I use the term "roughly" since these line graph are not very precise. For instance, his prototypical line graph for developments (Example 3, see Arzamanov 1984, 64) features two explicit instances of G major, but the height of the last instance is almost twice as far from the center line as the first.



Example 4. Taneev's line graph of Beethoven's op. 13, I, with added Riemannian relationships in color (Arzamanov 1984, 65).

Table 1. Key relationships in Taneev's twelve-page notebook on modulatory plans (Belyaev 1927) with an additional example (*) from Arzamanov (1984, 61).[13]

Major Excerpts			
Ex.	Key	RNs	S&D?
2)	A	V IV I	Yes
4)	A	I ♭VI I	No
5)	A	IV ♭II V I	Yes
10)	E♭	v IV iv	Yes
14)	A	ii V I IV	Yes
16)	D	I IV vi ♭VI V	Yes
19)	E	I IV ♭II I	No
20)	C	ii iii	Yes
21)	E♭	I ii	No

Minor Excerpts			
Ex.	Key	RNs	S&D?
1)	Fm	III i VI iv V	Yes
3)	Am	III i v V	No
6)	Cm	VI V	Yes
7)	Am	III iv V	Yes
8)	Cm	iv VI i V iv i V	Yes
9)	Cm	iv V	Yes
11)	Cm	III iv i	No
12)	Am	iv III i	No
13)	Dm	III iv V	Yes
15)	Dm	VI iv ♭II III V	Yes
17)	Dm	iv VI ♭II I	No
18)	A♭m	i VI V	Yes
*	Gm	VI iv i V	Yes

> other three belong to the subdominant group. (1952, 247)

My research also finds that Taneev's requirement for tonicizations of both subdominant and dominant seen in the line graphs carry over to Taneev's harmonic reductions. Looking back, there are tonicizations of both subdominant and dominant keys in both of the previous reductions (Examples 1 and 2) and in Taneev's analysis of Stanchisky's fugue. In total, roughly 68% of Taneev's reductions seen in Belyaev (1927) and Arzamanov (1984, 61) feature tonicizations of both subdominant and dominant keys (Table 1). In the table below, I show all the keys tonicized in Taneev's examples from Belyaev and Arzamanov as roman numerals and indicate whether the example features both subdominant and dominant keys. I treat VI in minor as a subdominant and iii in major as a dominant because of their respectively flat and sharp key signatures. This practice follows Carpenter (1988, 442) who states that the line graphs depict flat and sharp keys as existing in subdominant and dominant zones, respectively.

If tonicizing both subdominant- and dominant-function harmonies is a significant element in most reductions, what is the significance of the other 32% of the reductions? I suggest these remaining reductions may be meant to illustrate the importance of function-preseving relationships because they all feature relative, parallel, and *leittonweschel* key relationships, save for example 21 (from Table 1).[14] For instance, Taneev's analysis of Beethoven's op. 2, no. 2, IV, mm. 66–74 does not feature a clear subdominant-function chord but features consecutive relative and parallel relationships (Example 5).[15]

In another example, Taneev refers to the *substitution* of F major for A minor in his analysis of op. 2, no. 2, IV, mm. 139–148 (Example 6)—which suggests a *leittonwechsel* relationship.[16] Belyaev relays a footnote by Taneev which states,

[13] For clarity, I only show the keys related to the overall unifying tonality. Three examples (Belyaev's examples 2 and 6 and the Arzamanov example) feature Taneev's concept of a unifying tonality of a higher order. For more on this concept, read Carpenter (1983, 269–271), Belyaev (1927, 195–196), and Arzamanov (1984, 56–62).

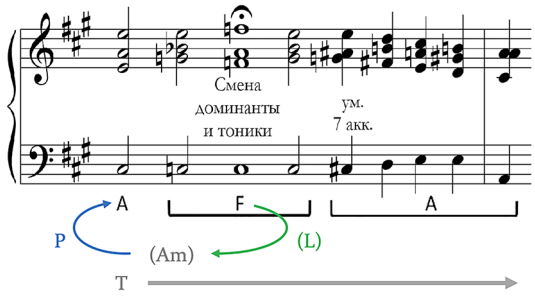
[14] Belyaev explains that example 21 is Taneev's example of a direct juxtaposition of keys without a modulation (1927, 201).

[15] Translation of Russian in Example 5: "The unifying tonality = the main tonality (= A minor)."

[16] Translation of Russian in Example 6: "Exchange of dominants



Example 5. Taneev's reduction of Beethoven's op. 2, no. 2, IV, mm. 66–74 (Belyaev 1927, 195, ex. 3) with annotations by the author in color.



Example 6. Taneev's reduction of Beethoven's op. 2, no. 2, IV, mm. 139–148 with added Riemannian annotations in color (Belyaev 1927, 195, ex. 4).

"Taneev explained this as a relationship of the latter harmony (F major) with A minor, the parallel of the main tonality" (Belyaev 1927, 195). Accordingly, F major is related to A minor via a *leittonwechsel*. Because this excerpt does not actually feature the A-minor tonicization mentioned by Taneev, it appears that he is suggesting an elided *leittonwechsel*-parallel relationship, in which the *leittonwechsel* relates F major to the elided A minor and the parallel relationship relates the elided A minor back to the main tonic of A major.

This A major–(A minor)–F major relationship is replicated in a later example (Belyaev 1927, 200–201) except in this case the progression relates subdominant-function chords (i.e., IV–(iv)–♭II). Belyaev writes, "In Example [7], the minor subdominant (A minor) is replaced by VI, the key of F major."[17] As in Example 7, there is no A-minor chord despite Taneev mentioning a minor subdominant in this E-major excerpt. Accordingly, this suggests another elided *leittonwechsel*-parallel relationship.

In closing, Arzamanov and Carpenter are correct in noting that some aspects of Taneev's theory of unifying tonality correlate with Riemannian relationships. My research builds on Carpenter's claim that Taneev's line graphs depict Riemann-/Hauptmann-like juxtapositions of dominant and subdominant spheres by showing quotes by Taneev that refer to the importance of surrounding tonic with subdominant and dominant keys.[18] Furthermore, I demonstrated how Taneev related chords via relative, parallel, and *leittonwechsel* relationships by highlighting these relationships in Taneev's line graphs and reductions.

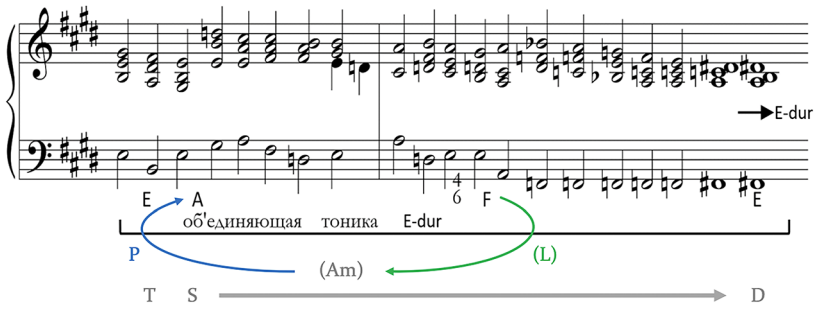
3. Taneev's Relationship to Rimsky and Riemann

Naturally, showing that some of Taneev's key relationships are Riemann-like is far from establishing that Taneev knew of Riemann's theories and was implementing them in his analyses. However, it does invite an exploration into any connection between Taneev and the early figures within the Russian Riemannian tradition. In Taneev's case, he has strong connections to both Rimsky and Riemann. In this section, I will first establish Taneev's connection to Rimsky by showing that Taneev's teaching departed from Tchaikovsky to emulate Rimsky's dualistic focus on I, IV, and V and that Rimsky and Taneev discussed the latter's theory of modulatory plans. Next, I will show that Taneev read, studied, and taught Riemannian functional analysis and that Taneev's theory more closely corresponds to Riemann's writings than to the theories of Rimsky or other theorists used by Taneev at the conservatory (Tchaikovsky 1900; Bussler 1884; Prout 1896). The goal of this exploration is not to pinpoint exactly when Taneev shifted away from Tchaikovsky, when he may have emulated Rimsky's pedagogy, or when he incorporated Riemannian analysis. Instead, I intend to alter the current perspective that Rimsky's proto-functional theory prepared Russians for Catoire's much later adaptation of Riemann's theory of harmonic function by making a more direct claim

and tonics" and "dim[inished] seventh chord."

[17] In fact, Taneev's direct quote (preserved in Belyaev 1927, 202), does not even mention F major, writing, "Example [7] is an example of the juxtaposition of the major and minor subdominants."

[18] Taneev's reference to the similar use of dominant and subdominant *chords* will be explored later on through Riemann's similar overlap of key relationships and functional cadential progressions.



Example 7. Taneev's reduction of Beethoven's op. 14, no. 1, III, mm. 88–107 with added Riemannian annotations in color (Belyaev 1927, 200 ex. 19).

that the Rimsky prepared Taneev (and his students) for the acceptance of harmonic function through his writings and pedagogical conversations with Taneev. Then, I show that Taneev started reading Riemann's functional theories and incorporating elements from Riemann's theories into his upper-division form class. Finally, I suggest that Taneev's initial teaching of harmonic function and long friendship with Catoire paved the way for Catoire's full embrace of Riemann's harmonic theories in his textbook. Accordingly, I suggest that Taneev serves as a likely intermediary between Rimsky's proto-functional aspects and Catoire's adoption of Riemann that is overlooked by the vast majority of Western and Russian scholarship.

3.1 Rimsky

Taneev was well aware of Rimsky's teaching, given that they discussed pedagogy and curriculum over letters, they shared pedagogical materials, and Taneev visited the St. Petersburg Conservatory to oversee exams. Rimsky's and Taneev's tenures at their respective conservatories largely overlapped, with Rimsky starting at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1871 and Taneev starting in Moscow in 1878; both ended their tenures in 1905 with each writing a letter of support regarding the other's departure (Taneev 1952, 47, 524).[19] In addition to multiple personal letters and mutual piece dedications, Taneev and Rimsky often discussed pedagogy (Taneev 1952, 28–50). In fact, Taneev's archives show that he possessed and annotated Rimsky's "Program for the Theory of Composition" for the St. Petersburg Conservatory (Korabel'nikova 1974, 104), and Taneev's diaries show that he purchased Rimsky's *Textbook of Harmony* for his students (Taneev 1982, 168, 8 May 1900).[20] Furthermore, Taneev would have witnessed the teaching at the St. Petersburg Conservatory firsthand when he helped oversee exams there in 1898 (Taneev 1952, 37–38). During this trip, Taneev documents that he discussed his modulatory theory with Rimsky at length on 27 April 1898, writing,

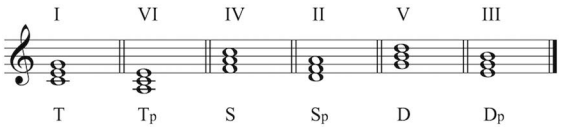
> I went to Nikolai Andreevich [Rimsky-Korsakov]'s house. [. . .] We talked all evening about forms, modulations, and developments. I showed him my modulatory plans of Beethoven's sonatas. (1981, 212)

So, what were the proto-Riemannian elements that Taneev would have seen in Rimsky that deviated from prior Russian pedagogy? Rimsky's textbook contains two claims that are related to functional harmony: (1) I, IV, and V generate the major scale and (2) vi, ii, and iii are tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords, respectively, based on relative relationships. Rimsky's first claim that I, IV, and V create the major scale (Rimsky [1885] 2014, 15) can be seen as a clear departure from previous Russian music theory because it drew the ire of Tchaikovsky. When editing Rimsky's textbook, Tchaikovsky wrote, "This does not explain anything, since the entire scale is also contained in the II, V, and VI chords" (Tchaikovsky 1957, 232–233). As Ewell (2020a, 64) notes, Rimsky's idea that I, IV, and V generate the major scale is a bedrock principle of function theory (cf. Harrison 2004, 11). Although Tchaikovsky's textbook similarly notes that I, IV, and V contain all the notes of the major scale, he gives I, IV, and V special stature based on different criteria: (1) they are the only major triads in the major scale and (2) their keys are close to each other on the circle of fifths (1900, 11). Regarding functional groups, Ewell shows how Rimsky set chords into functional tonic, subdominant, and dominant groups according to their common tones and relative-key relationships (Example 8).

Despite Taneev's continued use of Tchaikovsky's textbook (Starostin 2013, 17), Taneev emulated these two func-

[19] Rimsky was pushed out for his support of his students during the First Russian Revolution, whereas Taneev resigned primarily due to the firing of his colleague Georgy Conus.

[20] For context, Taneev was working on counterpoint and harmony with a student named Kolya. After the lesson, Taneev gave the student money to buy Rimsky's textbook and keep the change. The adjoining footnote by the editor confirms that it was Rimsky's harmony textbook (1982, 396n94).



Example 8. Ewell's depiction of Rimsky's functional relationships between I and VI, IV and II, and V and III (Ewell 2020a, 66).

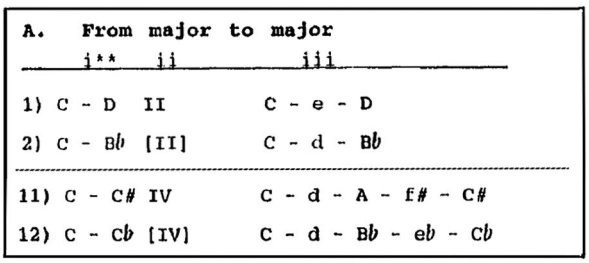
tional elements from Rimsky by (1) initially restricting students to I, IV, and V in his teaching and (2) considering vi, ii, and iii to have tonic, subdominant, and dominant function, respectively. Starostin conveys that Taneev's focus on I, IV, and V clearly departed from Tchaikovsky's teaching, writing,

> As a student of Tchaikovsky, Taneev was guided by the principles of his harmony textbook, but in his practical teaching he adhered to his own principles. Thus, the initial stage of harmony training under Taneev was associated with mastering the functional triads T–D–S—in contrast to Tchaikovsky, who accustomed his students to the full range of diatonic triads.[21] (Starostin 2018, 188)

This focus on the main functional triads is supported by Taneev's student Yavorsky, who claims that Taneev prioritized I, IV, and V and considered vi as a tonic and iii as a dominant, writing,

> According to Taneev's concepts, tonality was defined by a clear juxtaposition of the first, fourth, and fifth degrees in all their triad and seventh-chord forms. [. . .] The sixth degree was freely tolerated as an interruption after the dominant or as an extension of the progression from the tonic to the subdominant; the third degree was tolerated in its dominant position before the tonic.[22] (Yavorsky 1987, 269)

Naturally, there are also instances where Taneev's theory departs from Rimsky. Most notably, even though Taneev and Rimsky specifically met to discuss Taneev's modulatory plans of Beethoven (Taneev 1981, 212), they have distinctly different theories of key relationships. The main point of intersection between Rimsky's and Taneev's theories of modulatory plans is that they sought to avoid abrupt modulations. However, Rimsky is more focused on smooth paths between keys, whereas Taneev is more focused on each key's relationship to the unifying key. As shown by Larisa Jackson (1996, 48–97), Rimsky states that modulations should only occur between closely related keys—specifically his notion of first-degree key



A. From major to major		
	i** ii	iii
1)	C - D II	C - e - D
2)	C - B♭ [II]	C - d - B♭
11)	C - C# IV	C - d - A - f# - C#
12)	C - C♭ [IV]	C - d - B♭ - e♭ - C♭

Example 9. Selected modulatory plans between major keys from Rimsky's Prakticheskii Uchebnik *according to Jackson (1996, 69).*

relationships. For Rimsky, a first-degree key relationship is a major or minor triadic subset of the presiding scale—which includes the chromatic minor subdominant and the major dominant from Rimsky's harmonic major and minor scales, respectively. Therefore, to get to more distantly related keys, one must develop a modulatory plan that traverses a series of closely related keys. Shown above, Rimsky's first example of a more distant modulation features increasingly sharp keys, followed by a second one featuring increasingly flat keys (Example 9). The last two examples feature significantly more extended series of modulations incorporating the major dominant in minor (#11: D minor to A major) and the minor subdominant in major (#12: B♭ major to E♭ minor).

In this respect, Rimsky's modulatory plans are like nautical maps, in which one ventures to more distant realms through a series of intermediary destinations. In contrast, Taneev's theory promotes modulations that are all related to a unifying key by being diatonic chords or commonly used chromatic chords within that unifying key.[23] Taneev's insistence that keys be related to the unifying tonality not only set his theory apart from Rimsky but most of the theorists Taneev referenced at the Moscow Conservatory (e.g., Tchaikovsky 1900; Bussler 1884; Prout 1896; see Yavorsky 1987, 258–259), who all allowed for modulations a tritone away.[24]

In summary, there are two functional aspects in Rimsky's theory that correlate with documented aspects of Taneev's teaching: (1) focusing on I, IV, and V in a way that contrasts with Tchaikovsky and (2) assigning differ-

[21] Although Tchaikovsky introduces I, IV, and V before vi, ii, and iii in his textbook (1900, 11), Tchaikovsky's opposition to Rimsky's focus on I, IV, and V reinforces Starostin's claim that Tchaikovsky likely presented all diatonic triads together in his teaching.

[22] Yavorsky also notes that Taneev approved of Rimsky's complex consonance sequences (Yavorsky 1987, 269).

[23] A notable difference between Taneev and Rimsky is how closely they consider parallel keys. Because the minor tonic is a common chromatic chord in major, Taneev considers it a closely related key (Carpenter 1983, 268). In contrast, Rimsky considers both I → i and i → I to be second-degree relationships (Jackson 1996, 69–70).

[24] To be clear, Taneev was aware of how other theorists modulated a tritone away and an example of him showing a tritone modulation can be found in Starostin 2018, 187. However, Taneev's theory of modulatory plans certainly did not showcase tritone modulations.

ent chords into tonic, subdominant, and dominant groups. However, there is also clear evidence that Taneev's theory employed functional elements that go beyond Rimsky's proto-functional theory. Kaja Lill isolates two aspects of Riemann's theory of harmonic function that can be used to compare Rimsky's and Taneev's theories: (1) assigning chords function based on pitch-class content and (2) assigning chords a particular location in a harmonic progression (Lill 2024, 9).[25] In regard to the first element, Rimsky only assigns harmonies into function groups based on relative relationships. In contrast, Taneev's theory of modulatory plans also relates harmonies by parallel and *leittonwechsel* relationships (Examples 5, 6, and 7). Regarding the second element, Rimsky does not claim that passages must feature subdominant and dominant harmony for cadences. Instead, Rimsky's discussion of cadences primarily focuses on the final two chords in a phrase ([1885] 2014, 33–56). In contrast, Taneev constantly emphasizes the importance of featuring both subdominant and dominant keys in his modulatory plans—particularly in his line graph examples. Looking beyond function, Taneev also deviates from Rimsky in terms of modulation (despite both discussing their similarly named modulatory plans) by requiring all keys to be closely related to a unifying tonality.

3.2 Riemann

I suggest that Taneev's use of extended common-tone relationships, his insistence on subdominant- and dominant-function tonicizations, and his view of key relationships reflect his broad study of Riemann's theoretical works—particularly *Systematic Theory of Modulation* (Riemann 1898, trans. Engel). To support this claim, I will establish that Taneev had access to many of Riemann's writings and that he studied and taught Riemann's harmonic theories. I will then show that Taneev's key relationships closely resemble the modulation tables in Riemann's *Systematic Theory of Modulation* (1898), that Taneev had access to this work at the onset of his theory of unifying tonality, and that both Riemann and Taneev rationalize their key relationships by referencing functional harmonic progressions (i.e., cadences). Finally, I will explore the other theorists Taneev references at the Moscow Conservatory to see how their key relationships compare with Taneev's related keys.

As shown in his diaries, Taneev possessed many of Riemann's writings and he even attended meetings dedicated to discussing Riemann's harmonic theories. According to the editor of Taneev's diaries (Korabel'nikova in Taneev 1981, 1982, 1985), Taneev possessed over twenty of Riemann's books (Taneev 1982, 286n175, 24 November 1901).[26] Although these books are never listed in their entirety, the diaries do mention Taneev studying Riemann's *Lehrbuch des einfachen, doppelten und imitierenden Kontrapunkts* (1888), *Katechismus der Fugenkomposition* (1890a), *Katechismus der Harmonielehre* (1890b), and *Musik-Lexicon* (1882).[27] Furthermore, Taneev's diaries reveal that he attended multiple meetings on Riemann's harmonic system in 1903 led by his former student Engel (1985, 89, 101) who translated Riemann's *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre* in late 1901 and Riemann's *Systematic Theory of Modulation* in 1898. The latter text seems important within Taneev's sphere of influence because it was not only translated by Engel, but also by another of Taneev's students, Yavorsky, in 1899 (Ewell 2019, [9.4]).[28]

In his "Reminiscences of Sergei Ivanovich Taneev," Yavorsky confirms that Taneev taught from Riemann's textbooks in his form class and that Taneev accepted Riemann's inversional conception of minor (1987, 241–348).[29] First, Yavorsky establishes that Taneev used textbooks by Riemann (amongst others) in some of his classes, writing,

> These same considerations guided [Taneev] in his selection of textbooks. He settled on the works of Bussler and Bellermann, as well as those of Riemann and Prout, which had already appeared during his teaching career and sought to blaze new trails in the area of constructive foundations of musical thought. He did not use the textbooks of A. B. Marx, Lobe, Jadassohn, Richter, and other theorists, widely known in Western Europe, although he knew them well.[30] (Yavorsky 1987, 258–259)

Yavorsky then goes on to clarify that these authors were used in Taneev's counterpoint and form classes and relays Taneev's appraisals of each author. At first, Yavorsky establishes that Taneev preferred some theoretical aspects

[25] Lill also highlights voice leading, which is not a relevant element in Taneev's theory of modulatory plans (Lill 2024, 9–10).

[26] I am currently unable to directly confirm these contents due to travel restrictions to Russia. There appear to be no digital archives and my attempts to directly contact the managers of the archive have not received a reply.

[27] The diary also mentions Riemann's "Harmony" book (Taneev 1982, 102), but it is not clear whether it is *Skizze einer neuen Methode der Harmonielehre* (1880), *Handbuch der Harmonielehre* (1887), or another reference to the *Katechismus der Harmonielehre* (1890b). Since it is dated 6 November 1899, it does not reference Engel's translation of *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre*, which occurred in 1901.

[28] Ewell notes that Yavorsky completed his translation at twenty-two years old (2019, n. 49), suggesting a date of 1899. I assume that Yavorsky never published this translation because Engel published a translation of the exact same text a year earlier.

[29] As mentioned by Starostin (2013, 17), Taneev's harmony classes continued to use Tchaikovsky's harmony textbook.

[30] An important "other theorist" would be François-Joseph Fétis, who is repeatedly mentioned by Taneev regarding his theory of unifying tonality (1952, 230–231; 1962, 19). Although Fétis's derision of omnitonality correlates with Taneev's theory that all keys should be related (Fétis 2008), I do not reference Fétis further because he never establishes a theory of closely related keys. For more on Fétis and Taneev, read Carpenter (1983, 266–267).

from Ludwig Bussler and Ebenezer Prout over Riemann because Riemann attempted to subject counterpoint and nineteenth-century harmony to an underlying diatonic framework:[31]

> When selecting textbooks on strict and free styles and forms, [Taneev] settled upon the works of Bussler, as they afforded the greatest freedom of thought; in the strict style, they rejected the formulaic rigidity of "white-key" major tonality, whereas in the free style, they gravitated toward Bach-style voice leading. Subsequently, for these very same reasons, he preferred the textbooks of Prout to the works of Riemann—who sought to subject the strict style, the fugue, and the music of the nineteenth century alike to a rationalistic "diatonic" formula and claimed the primacy of meter over rhythm.[32] (Yavorsky 1987, 251)

However, this criticism of Riemann is immediately followed by Taneev's praise for other (unnamed) aspects of Riemann's theories:

> Despite this rejection of these fundamental principles of Riemann's musical thinking, there coexisted in Taneev an exceptional acknowledgment of the scholarly value of Riemann's works. In this regard, in Taneev's estimation, Prout could not compete with Riemann. (Yavorsky 1987, 251)

Because the earlier quote primarily focused on counterpoint, fugue, rhythm, and meter,[33] I suggest the latter part of this quote refers to Riemann's other theoretical contributions—namely his theories of modulation, form, function, and dualistic harmony. In fact, Taneev's approval of some of Riemann's dualistic ideas is relayed in a later quote by Yavorsky, who writes, "[Taneev] accepted Riemann's interpretation of the minor scale as an inversion of the major scale and in other difficult situations relied on it" (1987, 269–270).

Although *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre* is arguably Riemann's most influential harmonic text for music theory in general, I suggest Riemann's *Systematic Theory of Modulation* was the most influential text for Taneev's theory of unifying tonality for two reasons: (1) its earlier translation aligns with the onset of his theory of unifying tonality, and (2) its subject matter aligns with Taneev's upper-division form class in which Taneev's theory of unifying tonality was taught. As discussed earlier, Engel's translation of *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre* was not published until late 1901, and Taneev only mentions studying Riemann's harmonic theories at meetings hosted by Engel in 1903. Given Taneev's departure from the conservatory in 1905, it leaves very little time for Riemann's mature harmonic concepts to be incorporated into his form class (Zenkin 2022, 72). In contrast, Riemann's *Systematic Theory of Modulation* was translated by Engel in 1898, which chronologically aligns with Taneev's first mention of his analyses of modulatory plans in Beethoven sonatas with Rimsky and the beginning of Yavorsky's time at the conservatory. This earlier text also correlates with Taneev's distinct teaching of key relationships in his form class.[34] Arzamanov specifically highlights Taneev's focus on modulatory plans in his form class, writing,

> The theory of the tonal plan—which unifies keys—was fully developed in Russia for the first time by the remarkable scholar and pedagogue S. I. Taneev. By incorporating this theory into the curriculum for musical forms, Taneev once again approached the subject in a creative and innovative manner. (Arzamanov 1984, 15)

Furthermore, Yavorsky mentions Taneev's teaching of Riemann's inversional conception of minor (seen in Riemann's use of "^{0}" notation for minor, e.g., ^{0}g = C minor) and the importance of T–S–D–T progressions, which are present in this earlier text (Riemann 1898, 25). Conversely, Riemann's *Systematic Theory of Modulation* does not contain some of Riemann's most distinct functional designations seen in later *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre* (e.g., Tp), which correlates with the lack of this notation in Taneev's writings. Finally, Taneev specifically advised students to study form with Riemann as they traveled abroad, writing, "I am advising [Alexander Kartsev] to study free counterpoint with Glière or [Pavel] Juon in Berlin, and then musical forms with Riemann" (1985, 317–318, 2 May 1907).[35]

In *Systematic Theory of Modulation*, Riemann creates modulation tables that are related to functional harmonic progressions (i.e., Riemann's cadences). Riemann clearly lays out that these modulation tables are the most important aspect of this text in the conclusion of this book, writing,

> I shall limit myself merely to reiterating the significance of the tables of key relationships (p. 195 et seq.) and to most emphatically draw the reader's attention to the fact that these tables comprehensively cover everything that is musically conceivable in this regard.

[31] Rather than ascribing to a universal approach to music, Taneev is associated with delineating musical styles into historical time periods (Korabel'nikova 1974, 39; Starostin 2010, 48, 54; 2013, 17; Yavorsky 1987, 301).

[32] Yavorsky's framing suggests that Bussler's textbook was used for the strict and free styles, whereas Prout's and Riemann's textbooks were used for form.

[33] Riemann's theories on rhythm and meter were rejected by Taneev's close colleagues, Conus and Catoire—the latter of which was otherwise one of the most notable advocates for Riemann's theories in Russia (Carpenter 1983, 308). Conus and Catoire are two of the most mentioned figures in Taneev's diaries (1981, 1982, 1985). Conus has over 300 pages worth of entries, and Catoire has 135 pages worth of entries.

[34] Beyond key relationships, Taneev's program for his form class included the study of sentences and periods, phrase expansions and extensions, song forms, minuet and trio form, rondo form, sonata form, and cyclic forms (Arzamanov 1984, 18).

[35] In an earlier diary entry, Taneev encourages another student (Azanchevsky) to "study theory" with Riemann while living abroad (Taneev 1985, 106, 11 January 1904).

Table 2. Riemann's modulation table for C major from Systematic Theory of Modulation *(1898, 196).*

a⁺	°e⁺	°h⁺
f⁺	°c⁺	°g⁺
des⁺	as⁺	es⁺

Table 3. Riemann's extended cadence table from Systematic Theory of Modulation *(1898, 197).*

°a⁺	°e⁺	°h⁺	
f⁺	°c⁺	°g⁺	d⁺
des⁺	as⁺		

> If a student has not yet acquired sufficient fluency in navigating all the various keys, a single glance at these tables—or at a quickly sketched chart of keys related to a chosen one—can, at times, prove of inestimable value. (1898, 227–228)

After showing Arthur von Oettingen's *Tonnetz*, Riemann displays a modulation table for C major that is based on nearby tones in the *Tonnetz* (Table 2).

In this table, C major (i.e., c⁺) is placed in the center with the subdominant and dominant chords of F major and G major placed on the left and right, respectively. Above and below, Riemann places major keys a major third away from the central major chords. Finally, many chords feature minor-chord-producing inversions around their (Riemannian-conceived) roots by also having the "°" symbol to the left (e.g., °c for F minor).[36] After presenting this table, Riemann almost immediately shows a similar modulation table based on the extended cadence in C major, which Riemann refers to as a "somewhat different form" of the earlier modulation table (Table 3). The only differences are that this second one includes D minor and D major while excluding E♭ major.

Following Lill (2024, 8–61), I suggest that the pitch-class relations of the first table correspond with the cadence-based relationships in the second table. Below, I give a table reflecting Riemann's first modulation table with roman numerals (Table 4). The only addition is the minor supertonic (i.e., ii), which appears in Riemann's extended cadence, in addition to being prominently featured in his later writings on modulation (e.g., *Katechismus der Harmonie- und Modulationslehre* [1906, 184]).

These keys in Riemann's modulation tables are far closer to Taneev's related keys than they are to the systems of key relationships seen in the other theorists Taneev referenced at the conservatory. Although Taneev never lists the entirety of his closely related keys, he did feature many key relationships in his analyses that are subsequently confirmed by Yavorsky. Table 5 shows all the tonicizations within a major key in Taneev's analyses with their number of instances below.

Although the parallel minor tonic is never featured as a tonicization, Taneev claims that the parallel minor tonic commonly substitutes for the main major tonality (Example 10).[37] For example, Taneev's analysis of Beethoven's op. 2, no. 3, IV in C major shows C *minor* serving as the unifying tonality for mm. 143–167 (shown at the bottom of the score with "C-moll"), which is explicitly stated by Taneev according to adjoining footnote relayed by Belyaev (1927, 197). Accordingly, every tonicization in this section is diatonically related to C minor (the parallel of the main key of the movement, C major) except for the common appearance of the major dominant at the end.[38]

From these analyses, we can produce Table 6a, a list of related keys seen in Taneev's analyses, which closely correspond to Yavorsky's recollection of Taneev's related keys (Table 6b). To show how these keys relate to Riemann's closely related keys, I have preserved the progression of chords seen in Table 4 (with missing chords denoted by "x").

The only difference is that Yavorsky also adds in III and ♭III (also seen in Riemann, Table 4 above) as well as ♯v (enharmonic parallel of ♭VI). Furthermore, Yavorsky emphasizes that "Taneev was especially fond of major on the lowered second degree (in C major: D♭)" (Yavorsky 1987, 269). This inclusion of ♭II sets Taneev apart from every other contemporary writer he references on key relations—except Riemann. As seen below, the other writers on key relationships Taneev referenced at the Moscow Conservatory both avoid ♭II and feature far less overlap with Taneev than Taneev does with Riemann (Table 7).[39]

Having discussed Rimsky's key relationships earlier, I will only discuss the nature of Tchaikovsky's and Prout's key relationships here. Although Tchaikovsky spends most of his time discussing closely related triads, he does mention that the "normal course" for modulations was based on the

[36] The use of both symbols to signify two distinct chords (e.g., °c⁺ signifies both F minor and C major) is supported later in the text (1898, 229), in which Riemann also writes out both the minor and major chords in prose.

[37] Translation of Russian in Example 10: "Unifying tonality: C minor," and "G (=the dominant [of C] minor)." As Carpenter (1983, 268) notes, the parallel tonic is the most common unifying tonality outside of the main tonic.

[38] C major returns at the beginning of the refrain in m. 181, which is shown in Taneev's example with an arrow pointing to C major (i.e., capital "C").

[39] As described earlier, these figures often allowed for distant modulations up to a tritone away. Accordingly, this example shows each figure's related keys, not which keys are allowed for modulation.

Table 4. Riemann's keys from his modulation tables.

I	i	ii	♭II	iii	III	♭III	IV	iv	V	vi	VI	♭VI	VII

Table 5. Tabulation of key relationship in Taneev's twelve-page notebook on modulatory plans (Belyaev 1927).

RNs	I	ii	♭II	iii	IV	iv	V	♭VI	vi	♭III & i
Instances	12	6	1	5	7	2	5	2	1	0



Example 10. Taneev's reduction of Beethoven's op. 2, no. 3, IV, mm. 143–167 (Belyaev 1927, 197, ex. 8).

Table 6a. Modulations featured in Taneev's analyses of Beethoven for major (Belyaev 1927).

I	i	ii	♭II	iii	x	x	IV	iv	V	vi	x	♭VI	x

Table 6b. Taneev's related keys for major according to Yavorsky (1987, 269).

I	i	ii	♭II	iii	III	♭III	IV	iv	V	vi	x	♭VI	x
												(♯v)	

Table 7a. Tchaikovsky's and Prout's related and nearly related keys for major (Tchaikovsky 1900, 11; Prout 1896, 38).

I	x	ii	x	iii	x	x	IV	x	V	vi	x	x	x

Table 7b. Rimsky's first-degree relations for major ([1885] 2014, 69).

I	x	ii	x	iii	x	x	IV	iv	V	vi	x	x	x

circle of fifths (1900, 68), which I realize as the keys a perfect fifth above and below tonic and their relative keys.[40] Prout alternatively bases his key relationships on intervallic relationships in which IV and V are closest because "their tonics form perfect consonances with [I]," whereas vi, ii, and iii are nearly related because they are relative keys of I, IV, and V (1896, 38).[41]

Not only do Taneev's key relations closely match those in Riemann's modulation tables, but both figures also similarly assign these keys subdominant, tonic, and dominant function. Because of their key signatures, Taneev's theory would designate the diatonic keys of IV and ii as subdominant, I and vi as tonic, and V and iii as dominant. Similarly, Riemann assigns F major and D minor as subdominant, C major and A minor as tonic, and G major and E minor as dominant in his modulation table and extended cadence for C major (Tables 2 and 3).[42] This correlation continues to their functional designations of chromatic keys. As seen

[40] My reading reflects Tchaikovsky's opening exploration of the essential major triads (I, IV, V) and their relative chords (vi, ii, iii), which Tchaikovsky also relates to the circle of fifths (1900, 11).

[41] Adding in Prout's second-degree relationships brings it much closer to Taneev and Riemann by adding in III, ♭III, iv, VI, and ♭VI (Prout 1896, 38–39). Accordingly, there would not have been much conflict in Taneev's utilization of both Prout and Riemann. Prout also similarly advised against distant modulations like Taneev despite showing tritone modulations (1896, 51).

[42] In Riemann's later writing on key relationships in *Katechismus der*

in Examples 6 and 7, Taneev shows examples where major triads can be substituted with major triads a major third below—specifically F major in A major.[43] Tonic is substituted with ♭VI in Example 6, whereas subdominant is substituted with ♭II in Example 7. Similarly, Table 2 shows that Riemann places ♭VI and ♭II respectively in the tonic and subdominant columns of his modulation table for C major (i.e., as^{+} and des^{+}). The only functional deviation between Riemann's modulation table and Taneev's analyses is that Riemann's table shows F minor and C minor (i.e., ^{o}c and ^{o}g) as being in the tonic and dominant columns, whereas Taneev's examples would assign these chords subdominant and tonic function because of their parallel relationship (cf. Examples 3 and 4).[44]

Looking at broader theoretical relationships, both figures similarly correlate key relationships with functional chord progressions (i.e., cadences). In his letter to Amani, Taneev states that the key relationships for C major are based on "cadences" (i.e., functional cadential progressions), writing,

> In other words, what brings connection to the keys to which we modulate? Just as a key brings connection and unity to a series of chords belonging to it, so can a series of keys can be united by a key of a higher order. Let us call such a key a unifying tonality.
>
> 
>
> For example, in a cadence in C major, if we make modulations in a key corresponding to its individual chords, then these keys will preserve the same connection among themselves as the chords of the cadence had, and their unifying tonality will be C major. (Taneev 1952, 226)
>
> 
>

This resembles Riemann's connection of the keys related within his modulation table (Table 2) to the chords within the extended cadence in C major (Table 3). In addition, Taneev similarly uses the term "cadence" to refer to an extended harmonic progression, rather than a two-chord closing harmonic formula. This contrasts with Tchaikovsky, who typically refers to "cadence" as a two-chord closing formula, although Tchaikovsky also refers to a prototypically four-chord "extended cadence" (*rasprostranennoy kadentsiyey*) that also goes tonic–subdominant–dominant–tonic (1900, 57).

Furthermore, this interrelation of functional cadential progressions and modulation can be seen in both Taneev's and Riemann's views on form. As mentioned earlier, Taneev taught his theory of unifying tonality in his upper-division form class (Zenkin 2022, 72). Accordingly, each of Taneev's line graphs depicts a development section in a Beethoven sonata ending with a S–D–T progression of keys (Examples 3 and 4; see more line graphs in Arzamanov 1984, 65). Similarly, Riemann connected modulations and functional cadential progressions with form. The connection of modulation and form is given in the full title of his work: *Systematic Theory of Modulation as the Basis of a Theory of Musical Forms* (1898). Early in the text, Riemann identifies the two factors that combine to create form: "These two factors—the harmonic construction of cadences and rhythmic symmetry—together constitute what is known in music as 'form'" (Riemann 1898, 8). Despite mentioning rhythmic symmetry, however, Riemann primarily focuses on the formation of cadences (i.e., T–S–D–T; chap. 1–3) and modulation techniques (chap. 4–7) with only one subsection devoted to rhythm (sec. 19). Accordingly, Riemann almost exclusively discusses the harmonic construction of phrases (i.e., microform) and key relationships—thus avoiding any meaningful discussion of small or large forms. Similarly, all of Taneev's harmonic reductions focus on the harmonic relationship between keys in phrases.

Conclusion

Despite the widespread consensus that Russian functional theory flowed from Rimsky's proto-functional theories to a full embrace of Riemannian functional analysis by Catoire, I showed that Taneev was teaching elements of functional harmony at the Moscow Conservatory decades before Catoire and that he was well aquainted with the writings of both Rimsky and Riemann. To show this, I first built on the observations of Arzamanov (1984) and Carpenter (1983, 1988) that highlight Riemann-like juxtapostions of subdominant and dominant harmonies and function-preserving key relationships in Taneev's theory of unifying tonality. Next, I showed how Taneev's theory connects to the proto-functional aspects of Rimsky's writings by showing that Taneev frequently discussed pedagogy and curriculum with Rimsky and emulated his focus on I, IV, and V in a distinct departure from Tchaikovsky. Finally, I showed

Harmonie- und Modulationslehre (1906, 184), he features a different set of diatonic relationships in which they can have multiple functions (e.g., vi could be either Tp or S).

[43] Taneev's preserved commentary on this example (from Belyaev 1927, 202) draws specific attention to F major being a major third below tonic, writing, "In example [6], there is a modulation to the major key that lays a major third lower, which can be explained as the harmonic desire of the unifying tonality to be like the parallel minor [i.e., A minor]."

[44] As shown in Table 6, there are no examples of Taneev discussing the functional associations of the other keys shown in Riemann's modulation table for C major (i.e., III, ♭III, (♮)VI, and (♮)VII).

that Taneev read Riemann's functional writings and taught Riemann's functional ideas in his classes, and I isolated correspondences between Taneev's theory of unifying tonality and Riemann's *Systematic Theory of Modulation* involving both content and theoretical reasoning. These new findings partially came from referencing two sources that are not often discussed in the literature: (1) Taneev's diaries, which show that Taneev possessed and studied Riemann's harmonic theories, and (2) Yavorsky's "Reminiscences of Sergei Ivanovich Taneev," which states that Taneev taught Riemann's theories and that Taneev accepted some of Riemann's harmonic ideas.

Accordingly, I show how Taneev can be seen as an important figure between the proto-functional elements of Rimsky and Catoire's later adoption of Riemann. Following Carpenter (1988, 577), I find that Rimsky opened Russians up to the idea of functional relationships which were subsequently implemented by Catoire through his adoption of Riemann. My research simply adds that Taneev served as an important intermediary between these two figures by being the first to introduce Riemann's functional ideas into the Moscow Conservatory. Noting Taneev's role in introducing Riemann to the Moscow Conservatory does little to diminish Catoire's significance because Taneev's use of Riemann appears to be more limited and less focused than Catoire's. That is, Taneev referenced a wide variety of well-known scholars throughout Europe and Russia, including Tchaikovsky, Rimsky, François-Joseph Fétis, Prout, Bussler, Heinrich Bellermann, A. B. Marx, Johann Lobe, Salomon Jadassohn, Ernst Richter, and others—including Riemann. In contrast, Catoire served an important role in elevating Riemannian functional analysis by primarily focusing on adapting Riemann's functional ideas. In short, Taneev was more focused on combining Riemann's ideas with other contemporary theories (including his own) than prioritizing Riemannian functional analysis.

I hope this research spurs further study into Taneev's theory and its impact on his students. As mentioned by Arzamanov, the Tchaikovsky State Memorial Music Museum in Klin contains many additional line graphs made by Taneev that may shed new light on his theory (Arzamanov 1984, 65). In addition, many famous composers who studied with Taneev have not been examined through his theory of unifying tonality, including Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Nikolai Medtner, and Glière. In particular, Scriabin would be an ideal case study because it is already documented that he applied Taneev's theory to his personal study of Beethoven's sonatas (Belyaev 1927, 203).

In closing, the arrival of Riemannian functional theory in Russia is consistently viewed as one of the most significant moments in Russian music theory (Boyarkina 2017; Carpenter 1983; Ewell 2020a; Starostin 2010, 2013). Despite previous scholars stating that Riemann's ideas were not prevalent until Catoire's Riemann-based textbook in 1924, I have suggested that aspects of Riemann's theory were present over twenty years earlier through the teaching of Taneev. This raises multiple questions regarding what happened during this over twenty-year gap between Taneev's teaching of Riemann and Catoire's textbook. Did Riemann's ideas impact the theories of Taneev's theory students such as Yavorsky? Did Taneev's use of Riemann in the teaching of form continue after he left the conservatory in 1905? Did Taneev and Catoire's constant meetings—which lasted from the onset of Taneev's theory of unifying tonality until Taneev's death—impact Taneev's teaching or Catoire's later adoption of Riemann?[45] These questions must wait for another study. What is clear is that Taneev's impact on Russian music pedagogy goes beyond his much-discussed teaching of counterpoint. Starostin states that Taneev's teaching elicited high praise for not only counterpoint, but for harmony and form as well (Starostin 2013, 17). This study shows that Taneev's practice of reading a wide variety of scholars to develop novel approaches to music instruction is not limited to counterpoint. Taneev was studying and teaching the most recent theories on harmony and form from throughout Russia and Europe—introducing the momentous theories of Riemann in the process.

References

Arzamanov, Fedor Georgievich. 1984. *C. I. Taneev—prepodavatel' kursa muzykal'nykh form* [Sergei Taneev: Teacher of a course on musical form]. Moscow: Muzyka.

Bakulina, Ellen. 2020. "The 'Brigade Textbook:' Disseminating the Riemannian Legacy in the Russian-Soviet Theoretical Tradition." *Theoria* 26: 85–110.

Belyaev, Viktor. 1927. "Analiz moduliatsii v sonatakkh Betkhovena' S. I. Taneeva" [The analysis of modulations in Beethoven's sonatas by S. I. Taneev]. In *Russkaia kniga o Betkhovene* [A Russian book about Beethoven], edited by Konstantin Alekseevich Kuznetsov, 191–204. Moscow: Gosudarstvennaia akademiia khudozhestvennikh nauk.

Boyarkina, Albina. 2017. "Perevody trudov Gugo Rimana na russkiy yazyk" [Russian translations of works by Hugo Riemann]. *Zhurnal Obshchestva Teorii Muzyki* [Journal of the Society for Music Theory] 2 (18): 41–48.

[45] Although there is no explicit documentation that their conversations involved Riemannian functionalism, there is evidence that the two figures thought similarly. First, both figures heavily referenced German music theory. Catoire unambiguously employed Riemannian music theory, whereas Taneev (with Nikolai Kashkin) translated Bussler's *Musikalische Formenlehre* (1884) and *Der Strenge Satz* (1885). Additionally, the two mutually bemoaned the rise of unmitigated chromaticism in modern music and employed mathematical concepts in their theoretical works (Carpenter 1983, 292).

Brown, David. 2001. "Taneyev, Sergey Ivanovich." *Grove Music Online*. Accessed 3 July 2022. https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027469.

Bussler, Ludwig. 1884. *Musikalische Formenlehre*. Translated by Nikolai Kashkin and Sergei Taneev. Moscow: Jurgenson.

———. 1885. *Der Strenge Satz*. Translated by Sergei Taneev. Moscow: Jurgenson.

Carpenter, Ellon. 1983. "The Contributions of Taneev, Catoire, Conus, Garbuzov, Mazel, and Tiulin." In *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music*, edited by Gordon McQuere, 253–378. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.

———. 1988. "The Theory of Music in Russia and the Soviet Union, ca. 1650–1952." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania.

Catoire, Georgy. 1924. *Teoreticheskiy kurs garmonii* [Theoretical course of harmony]. 2 vols. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo muzykal'nyi sector.

Desbruslais, Simon. 2015. "The Western Reception of Sergei Taneyev." *Zhurnal Obshchestva Teorii Muzyki* [Journal of the Society for Music Theory] 9 (1): 7–18.

Ewell, Philip. 2019. "On the Russian Concept of Lād, 1830–1945." *Music Theory Online* 25 (4). https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.19.25.4/mto.19.25.4.ewell.html.

———. 2020a. "Harmonic Functionalism in Russian Music Theory: A Primer." *Theoria* 26: 61–84. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc2237392/.

———. 2020b. "Reexamining the 1930 Conference on Boleslav Yavorsky's Ladovy Rhythm and the Early Politics of Soviet Music Theory." *Iskusstvo muzyki: teoriya I istoriya* [The art of music: Theory and history] 22/23: 214–233.

Fedorovna, Malysheva. 2017. "B. L. Yavorskiy o muzykal'nykh predpochteniyakh S. I. Taneeva" [B. L. Yavorsky on the musical preferences of S. I. Taneev]. *Historical, Philosophical, Political, and Legal Sciences: Cultural Studies and Art History: Issues of Theory and Practice* 8 (82): 118–120.

Fétis, François-Joseph. 2008. *Traité complet de la théorie et de la pratique de l'harmonie*. Translated by Peter M. Landey. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press.

Harrison, Daniel. 2004. Review of *Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought*, by Alexander Rehding. *Music Theory Online* 11 (2). https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.05.11.2/mto.05.11.2.harrison.html

Jackson, Larisa. 1996. "Modulation and Tonal Space in the Practical Manual of Harmony: Rimsky-Korsakov's Harmonic Theory and Its Historical Antecedents." PhD diss., Columbia University.

Korabel'nikova, Lyudmila. 1974. *S. I. Taneev v Moskovskoy Konservatorii* [S. I. Taneev at the Moscow Conservatory]. Moscow: Muzyka.

Lill, Kaja. 2024. "Harmonic Function: Hugo Riemann and his Czech Reception." PhD diss., University of Michigan.

Lukina, Galima. 2020. "An Overview of Russian and English-American Studies on Sergey Taneyev's Creative Activity." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 416: 277–281.

Mazel', Lev. 1978. *Voprosy analiza muzyki* [Music analysis questions]. Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor.

McQuere, Gordon D. 1983. "The Theories of Boleslav Yavorsky." In *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music*, edited by Gordon McQuere, 109–159. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.

Protopopov, Sergei. 1947. *Pamyati Sergeya Ivanovicha Taneeva* [In memory of Sergei Ivanovich Taneev]. Moscow: Myzgiz.

Prout, Ebenezer. 1896. *Musical Form*. London: Augener.

Riemann, Hugo. 1880. *Skizze einer neuen Methode der Harmonielehre*. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel.

———. 1882. *Musik-Lexicon*. Leipzig: Max Hesse.

———. 1887. *Handbuch der Harmonielehre*. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel.

———. 1888. *Lehrbuch des einfachen, doppelten und imitierenden Kontrapunkts*. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel.

———. 1890a. *Katechismus der Fugenkomposition*. Leipzig: Max Hesse.

———. 1890b. *Katechismus der Harmonielehre*. Leipzig: Max Hesse.

———. 1893. *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre*. London: Augener.

———. 1898. *Systematische Modulationslehre als Grundlage der musikalischen Formenlehre*. Translated by Yoel Engel. Moscow: Jurgenson.

———. 1906. *Katechismus der Harmonie- und Modulationslehre*. Leipzig: Max Hesse.

Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai. (1885) 2014. *Uchebnik garmonii* [Harmony textbook]. St. Petersburg: Planeta Muzyki.

Sabaneev, Leonid. 2003. *Vospominaniya O Taneeve* [Reminiscences of Taneev]. Moscow: Klassika-XXI.

Segall, Christopher. 2014. "Sergei Taneev's Vertical-Shifting Counterpoint: An Introduction." *Music Theory Online* 20 (3). https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.14.20.3/mto.14.20.3.segall.php.

Starostin, Ivan. 2010. "K istorii prepodavaniya muzykal'no-teoreticheskikh distsiplin v Moskovskoy konservatorii" [On the history of teaching music-theoretical disciplines at the Moscow Conservatory]. *Scientific Bulletin of the Moscow Conservatory* 1: 44–56.

———. 2013. "Moskovskaya shkola prepodavaniya garmonii" [The Moscow school of harmony teaching]. PhD diss., Moscow Conservatory.

———. 2018. "Nachal'nyi etap izycheniia garmonii pod rukovdstvom S. I. Taneeva" [The initial stage of harmony instruction under the guidance of S.I. Taneev]. In *S. I. Taneev i A. N. Skryabin. Uchitel' i uchenik* [S. I. Taneev and A. N. Scriabin: Teacher and pupil], edited by I. A. Skrortsova, N. D. Sviridovskaya, and E. E. Potyarkina, 184–194. Moscow: Chaykovskiy Moscow State Conservatoire.

Taneev, Sergei. 1952. *S. I. Taneev: Materials and Documents*. Moscow: Academic Sciences of the USSR.

———. 1962. *Convertible Counterpoint in the Strict Style*. Translated by G. Ackley Brower. Boston: Bruce Humphries.

———. 1981. *Diaries*. Vol. 1, 1894–1898. Edited by Lyudmila Korabel'nikova. Moscow: Muzika.

———. 1982. *Diaries*. Vol. 2, 1899–1902. Edited by Lyudmila Korabel'nikova. Moscow: Muzika.

———. 1985. *Diaries*. Vol. 3, 1903–1909. Edited by Lyudmila Korabel'nikova. Moscow: Muzika.

Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilyich. 1900. *Guide to the Practical Study of Harmony*. Translated by Eil Krall and James Liebling. Moscow: Jurgenson.

———. 1957. *P. Tchaikovsky: Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy* [P. Tchaikovsky: Complete works]. Vol. 3a. Moscow: Gosudarstvoe Muzykal'noe Izdatel'stvo.

Yavorsky, Boleslav. 1987. "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Ivanoviche Taneeve" [Reminiscences of Sergei Ivanovich Taneev]. In *Izbrannïye trudï* [Selected works], vol. 2, part 1, compiled by Isaak S. Rabinovich, 241–348. Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor.

Zenkin, Kostantin. 2022. "Russian Pedagogy in Composition and Music Theory During Scriabin's Creative Period." In *Demystifying Scriabin*, edited by Kenneth Smith and Vasilis Kallis, 64–80. Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press.

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 85–103

Three Forms of "Tristesse"*

by John Y. Lawrence

Abstract. This article builds on my previous article, "Lyricist as Analyst," claiming that rhyme schemes in lyrics written to pre-existing music have implications for formal analysis: they suggest where formal units begin and end, and what those units' relationship is to each other. This article applies this model to two popular-song adaptations of Chopin's Etude in E major, Op. 10/3: Jean Marietti and André Viaud's "Reviens mon amour" and Sonny Miller's supposed translation of that song as "So Deep is the Night." The unconventional form of Chopin's melody inspired the lyricists to write unconventional rhyme schemes, which sometimes reinforce how a listener likely would have analyzed the musical form anyway, and other times supplement, contradict, or override the results of a music-only analysis. I suggest that adaptations of classical works have much to teach us about the originals, because they capitalize on affordances that might otherwise have remained dormant.

Keywords and phrases: Text-music interaction; rhyme; Chopin; listener; *Formenlehre*.

Introduction

This article is about the music of one of the great popular composers of the early twentieth century: Frédéric Chopin. Yes, twentieth century, not nineteenth century. After Joseph McCarthy and Harry Carroll adapted the middle section of *Fantaisie-Impromptu* into the smash hit "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" in 1917, pop song adaptations of Chopin's music seemed to spring up everywhere for the next few decades. The A-flat polonaise became "Till the End of Time" (adapted by Buddy Kaye and Ted Mossman), the D-flat nocturne became "My Promise to You" (adapted by Ervin Drake and Jimmy Shirl), and the E-flat nocturne became "My Twilight Dream" (adapted by Eddy Duchin and Lew Sherwood).

One of the most popular choices for this sort of adaptation was the main theme of Étude in E major, op. 10, no. 3, written in 1832. As of this publication, the website SecondHandSongs lists 20 pop songs in 11 languages based on this melody.[1] Although the melody is in a major key and is dominated by tonic and dominant harmonies, critics in Chopin's time detected an undercurrent of melancholy in the music, and thus nicknamed the piece "Tristesse" ("sadness") or "L'adieu" ("farewell"). Many lyrics that were written to this melody (knowingly or unknowingly) reflect these nicknames by depicting a protagonist pining for their ab-

* My thanks to George Adams, Poundie Burstein, and Julianne Grasso for their comments on an earlier form of this material, to Jess Peritz for learning these songs together with me when we performed them, to Alden Thompson for his help in tracking down the score of "Reviens mon amour," and to this journal's readers and editorial board for their helpful suggestions, which substantially transformed the article.

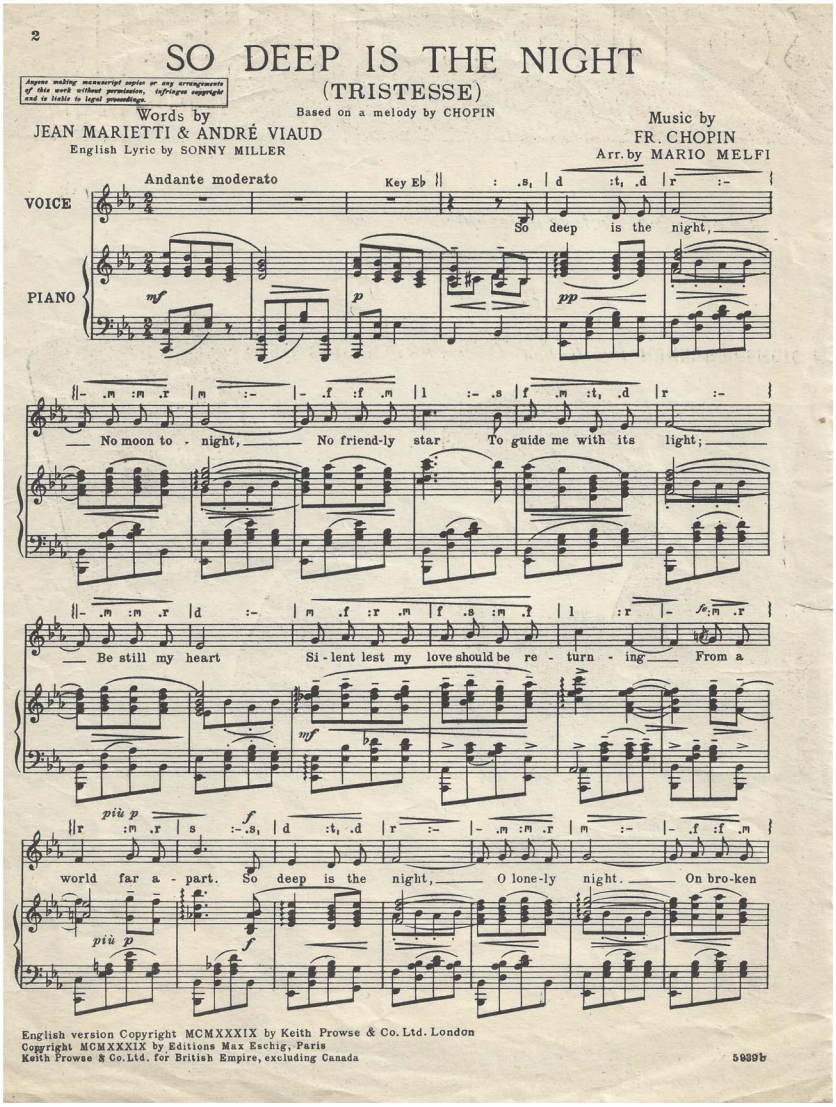
[1] https://secondhandsongs.com/work/179407/all. Note that although there are more than 20 entries, some of these are duplicates. For more on popular songs adapted from this étude, see Raykoff (2014, 165–167; 266, n. 55).



Example 1. Cover of "Reviens mon amour" (1939).

sent love. One such adaptation was a 1939 French song with lyrics by Jean Marietti and André Viaud, sold sometimes under the title of the étude's nickname, "Tristesse," and other times under the title of the first line of the lyrics, "Reviens mon amour." (For the sake of clarity, I will refer to it by the latter title in the remainder of this article.) **Example 1** shows the cover of the published sheet music, which uses "Reviens mon amour" as the title and "Tristesse" as the subtitle. Although the song is marketed as a tango, the original rhythm of Chopin's melody remains unchanged. Traces of tango—and rather faint ones at that—are detectable only in the accompaniment rhythms and instrumentation. Mario Melfi is the credited arranger on the sheet music. But "arranger" here does not primarily mean the person responsible for the instrumental arrangement, as Melfi remained credited in many subsequent recordings and versions that did not share the exact arrangement from either Bruno Clair's original recording or the version released by Melfi himself the same year (with the mononymous Bernardi as the singer). Instead, Melfi appears to be credited as the arranger for the act of adapting the music from the original étude, although (as we shall see) this involved minimal recomposition or reharmonization.

The same year, the French adaptation was released in the United Kingdom as "So Deep Is the Night" with new English lyrics by lyricist Sonny Miller, first recorded by Jack



Example 2. First page of "So Deep Is the Night" (1939).

Hylton (a bandleader fond of "jazzing" classical music) and his orchestra with vocalist Sam Browne (1939).[2] Although Marietti and Viaud retain lyricist credits in the published sheet music (**Example 2**), Miller's lyrics are not a translation of the Marietti and Viaud's words. Miller preserves neither the meaning nor (equally crucially, for this article) the rhyme scheme of the French lyrics.[3] And the song is no longer advertised as a tango. Instead, Hylton's record is marketed as a foxtrot and played at a much faster clip than most subsequent recordings of the song, which treat it as a slow-to-medium-tempo ballad.

It may be surprising that I propose to embark on analyses of these songs. Many listeners and scholars alike would find the lyrics to these songs so pedestrian as to be unworthy of academic attention.[4] But this article is about these lyrics not merely as objects of analysis, but also as analyses themselves. I first made this perhaps unintu-

[2] For more on Hylton's penchant for playing adaptations of classical music, see Mawer 2014 (165–192).

[3] It is also not to be confused with a different English-language adaptation of the étude, also titled "So Deep is the Night," with lyrics by Al Stillman, which was released on recording in 1940. That song's musical adaptation by Jacques Dallin is much more radical.

[4] Mawer (2014, 177–180) is the only scholar I know of who has treated this song as an object of study, but she is primarily interested in the "added sociocultural meanings" accrued by Chopin's original through its transformation into a popular song and doesn't analyze any individual lines of the song.

itive claim—that song lyrics can function as analyses of songs—in the article "Lyricist as Analyst: Rhyme Scheme as Music-Setting in the Great American Songbook" (Lawrence 2024a). The logic behind this analogy is as follows: When confronted with a pre-existing melody, lyricists have to decide where to place line breaks, which means determining where the melody's internal units begin and end. They also have to place rhyme words at these line breaks, creating a rhyme scheme that establishes kinships and contrasts between units.[5] These two tasks—determining the boundaries of and relationships between formal units—are also the main duties of a formal analyst.

In "Lyricist as Analyst," I show that melodies in American popular songs of this era are frequently composed of eight-bar units that conform to standard sentence and period models, and each sentence and period type has a standard rhyme scheme that goes with it. Building on the work of David Temperley (2001), I treat such rhyme schemes as "descriptive"—that is, they are likely to reinforce (rather than challenge) the perception of musical form that one might have had when encountering the melody alone, without lyrics. However, when the form of the melody is ambiguous and/or departs from conventional models, rhyme schemes can play a more "suggestive" role: they can narrow the focus of listeners, making some interpretations of the music seem more viable, others less; or they can also broaden the focus of future analysts, introducing possible readings that would never have been salient from the music alone. As well shall see, the formal shape of the melody to Chopin's "Tristesse" étude is anything but straightforward. Any rhyme scheme that attains a sense of "fit" with the music will necessarily need to function suggestively.[6] This article operates under the assumption that insights can arise when we pay heed to such suggestions.

In the remainder of this article, I analyze the main melody of this étude three times. First, I look only at Chopin's music, to identify the formal difficulties it poses. Second, I see what analytical implications are suggested by the French lyrics, including multiple versions of some passages. Third, I examine the later English lyrics, to see what was lost in translation and what was gained.[7]

The mode of analysis I employ in this article rests on an assumption I have defended in prior work (Lawrence 2020): namely that if formal analysis is meant to reflect real-time listening processes (including listening to a piece for the first time) rather than the out-of-time act of score analysis, it needs to consider a listener's potential projections into the near future—their guesses about what might happen next based on what they have already heard.[8] I adopt this approach not as a matter of aesthetic preference, but rather because I think it is more consonant with the picture of the human mind drawn by cognitive science and music psychology alike.[9] According to this model, an experienced listener in any musical style will constantly predict the form of the second halves of themes after hearing their first halves (e.g. in Classical repertoire, by predicting continuations after hearing presentations and consequents after hearing antecedents). Analysis of this dimension requires attending to not only actual structures that emerge over the course of a piece but also the dialogue between the actual and expected structures. The idea of treating rhymes schemes as well in this manner has precedent in the work of Richard Plotkin (2023), who suggests that when listeners hear words at the ends of lines of lyrics, they develop preferences for which words will be rhymed later and when those rhymes will occur.[10] The analyses in this article show some of the things that can happen in the listening process when musical form and rhyme scheme interact.

1. Chopin's "Tristesse"

The main melody of Chopin's étude immediately poses formal surprises (to a listener) or challenges (to an analyst) within the first eight bars of the theme, which divide into 5 + 3, instead of 4 + 4 (**Example 3**).[11] There are two main ways of parsing the five-bar phrase: as 3 + 2 or 2 + 3. The first of these interpretations—most notably propounded by Heinrich Schenker (1979)—suggests that there is an underlying six-bar model whose second half has been com-

[5] Matthew BaileyShea likewise makes the case that rhyme can play a role in musical segmentation writing, "Rhymes in music help delineate cadences, subphrases, and syncopations by segmenting the language into smaller groups, whether regular, in the case of balanced phrases and subphrases" (2021, 83). For more on this, see BaileyShea 2021, Chapter 3. His orientation towards the lyrics-music relationship in Chapter 4 of that book, especially pp. 104–118, forms the obverse of mine: his concern is with how musical settings interact with a pre-existing sense of poetic form created by line breaks; mine is with how adding a text with line breaks interacts with a pre-existing sense of musical form.

[6] For more on the notion of "fit," see Lawrence 2024a (3–4).

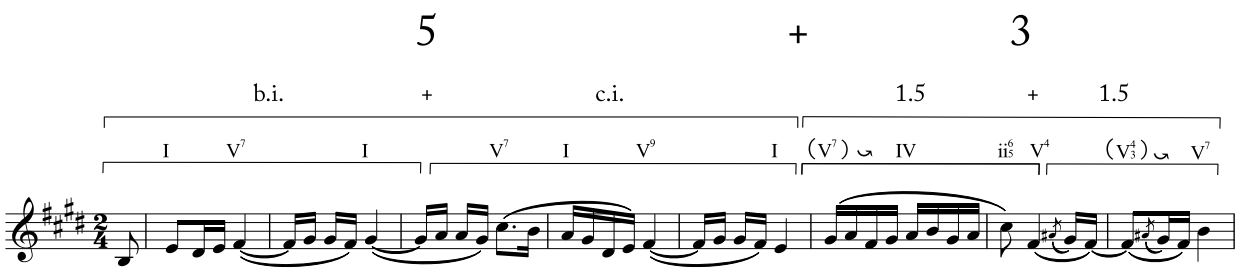
[7] The idea of extending my approach to understand the differences created by translation across languages has precedent in Anabel Maler's (2026) analysis of sign language covers of popular songs.

[8] For more on how first-time listening differs from later listenings, see Cone 1977.

[9] For more explanation of this, see Lawrence 2020 (1–4).

[10] Although I share with Plotkin (1) the belief that listeners will predict future rhymes in this manner and (2) the goal of modeling those predictions, I do not adopt his preference rules in this article, due to the problems I identified in Lawrence 2024b, [1.15–1.19].

[11] In this analysis, I consider only the challenges posed by grouping structure at the phrase/theme level. For problems created by the underlying syncopation, see Rink 2015 and Temperley 2008 (316–319).



Example 3. First eight measures of Chopin's melody.



Example 4. Four-bar recomposition of mm. 1–5, based on Stillman-Dallin (1940).

pressed by one bar.[12] I support the second of these interpretations, as shown in Example 3: a two-bar basic idea followed by a contrasting idea that has been stretched out to three bars rather than two. I would argue that this interpretation is likely truer to a listener's first, real-time hearing of this melody. Experienced listeners of this repertoire tend to default to hearing duple units, absent strong evidence to the contrary that indicates that the basic idea is continuing (in line with Schenker's reading). Such evidence in Schenker's favor might include the G♯ that is held across bars two and three. Militating against this reading, however, is the fact that: (a) the sixteenth-note rhythm on beat two of bar three would be a very unusual way to end a formal unit; and (b) the figure beginning on beat two of bar three is slurred with beat one of bar four. Further support for a 2+3 reading comes from the fact that if bar three is understood as the start of a new unit, the use of the tail motive of the basic idea as the head motive of the contrasting idea would conform to the standard device of "linkage technique."[13]

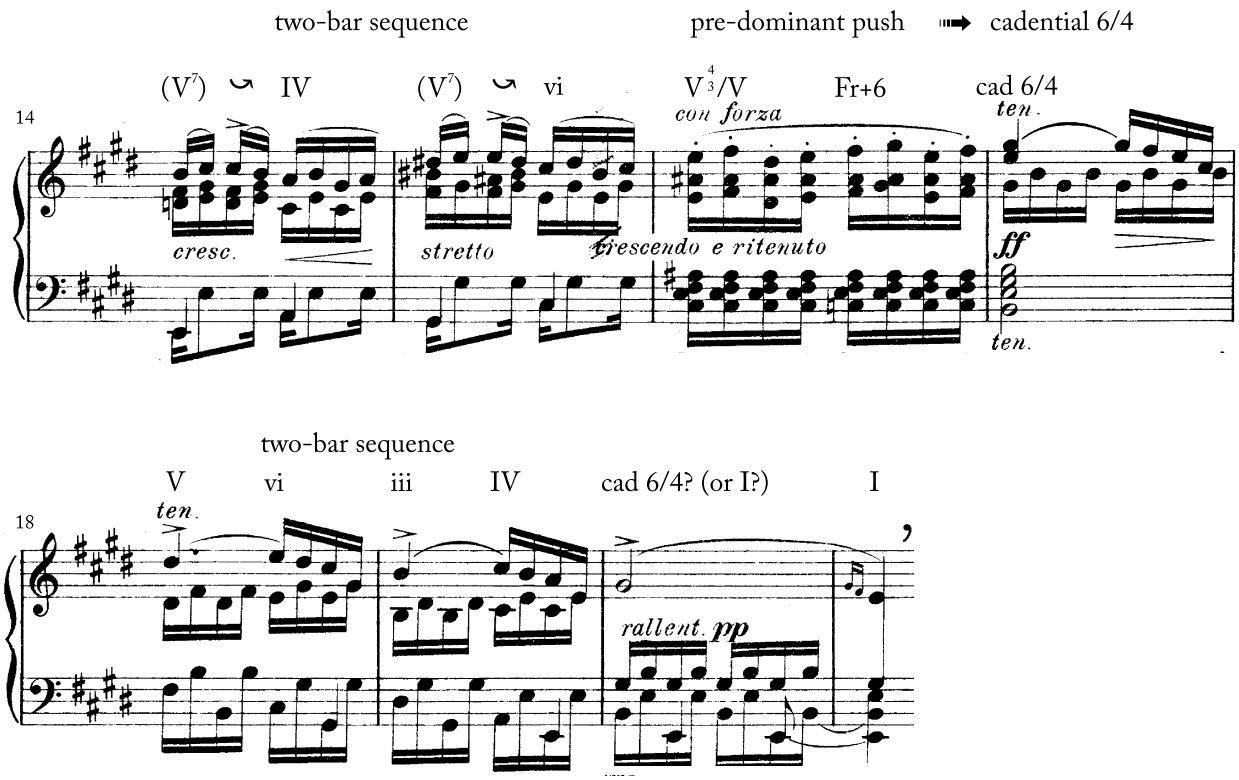
If one settles on 2+3 reading, an important additional question remains: how precisely did the two-bar contrasting idea become a three-bar idea? One option is that the idea has been stretched out, which William Caplin (1998) calls "expansion." (**Example 4** provides a potential four-bar model for what a pre-expanded form looks like, based on Dallin's recomposition of this song for his version of "So Deep Is the Night.") The other option is that an additional component has been tacked onto it, which Caplin calls "extension" (20). In this case, the answer to the question is determined by whether one hears mm. 3–5 as forming one cohesive unit (as if the goal was always tonic, and the dominant chord straddling mm. 4–5 stuck for too long) or they hear m. 5 as supplemental (as if the initial goal was the dominant chord in m. 4, and then m. 5 twists the music back to tonic after the fact).[14]

If a listener or an analyst finds both readings plausible (as indeed I do), their perception might be conditioned by the pianist's decision. If the pianist breaks the phrase at m. 5, an impression of extension may be created; if the pianist phrases very fluidly, the music may feel expanded instead. **Audio Example 1** provides samples of each of these from different recordings by Abbey Simon. In 1a, his Vox performance (1996 [recorded in 1976]), he dramatically alters the dynamics and his touch in m. 5, sharply differentiating it from m. 4, suggesting extension. By contrast, in 1b, his later Basilica recording (released in 2014, but no record-

[12] Heinrich Schenker's rather elliptical explanation is that the five-bar phrase "results from a rhythmic shift" and that "[w]ithout the eighth-note acceleration in m. 4, answered in parallelistic fashion in m. 5, six measures would have been required" (1979, 12). William Rothstein interprets Schenker as meaning that there is a two-step process going on here: first, there is an unsyncopated four-bar model for this phrase that one transforms into a six-bar phrase by "lengthen[ing] all but the first and last of the principal tones"; then, one compresses the last three bars of the six-bar version into two bars to arrive at a five-bar phrase (1989, 221).

[13] For an introduction to this concept, see Jones 1982 (7–9, 134–135) and Rothgeb 1983 (42–45). For a more contemporary view on this device, connecting it explicitly to the rhetorical technique of *anadiplosis*, see Alegant and McLean 2007 (5–6). This technique can be found in the theme type that Mark Richards (2016) calls a "periodic clause" and Dmitri Tymoczko (2023, 437–442) calls "tail-development form."

[14] Although I've used this to illustrate expansion, Stillman-Dallin version of "So Deep Is the Night" certainly operates under the assumption that the core compound basic idea has been completed after four bars, which supports an extension-based reading. This is clear because Dallin cuts mm. 5–8 and launches directly into the consequent phrase, making an eight-bar period! See Harry Cool's recording (1940).



Example 5. Compound consequent's continuation in A section (mm. 14–21).

ing date specified), Simon exaggerates the break between beats one and two in both measures 2 and 3; this brings out a sense of continuity between mm. 4–5, since there is no corresponding break, which supports an expansion reading.

Audio Example 1a. Abbey Simon's earlier recording of mm. 1–8.

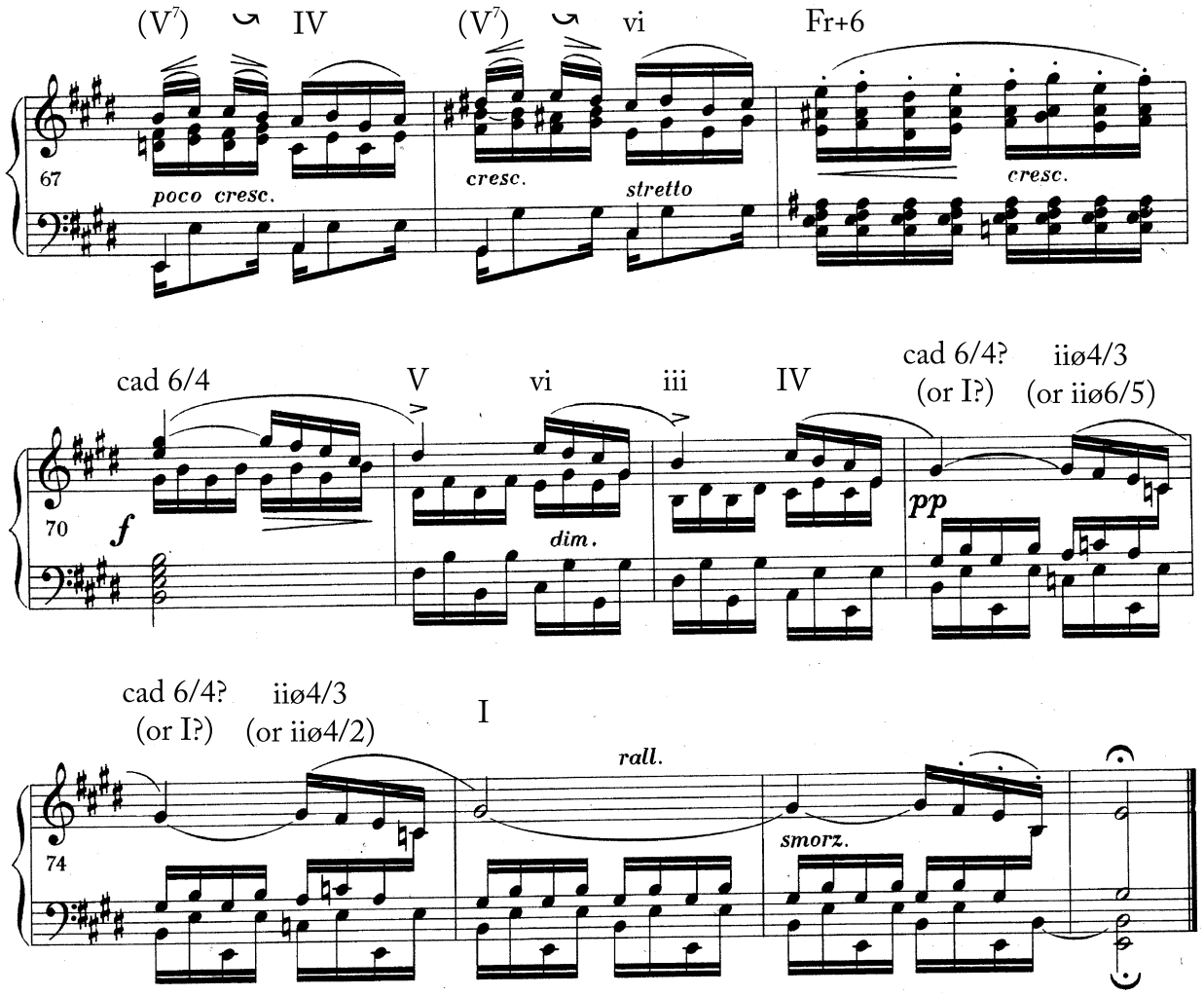
Audio Example 1b. Abbey Simon's later recording of mm. 1–8.

The new idea in mm. 6–8 seems less ambiguous. As shown in Example 3, this three-bar idea is composed of two units, each of which is one-and-a-half bars in length instead of two bars. This sort of compression is the counterpart of expansion not extension. The shorter length comes from shrinking the units, not from removing from one of them.

For a first-time listener, the strong modulation to V in m. 8—after much time spent dithering between tonic and dominant—may indicate that the theme has reached its midpoint. If so, they may form a hypothesis about what sort of theme this is and what is going to happen next. They might, perhaps, regard the basic idea and contrasting idea in the first five bars as forming some sort of compound basic idea, and therefore the next three as some sort of continuation (serving the same role in the compound antecedent that a contrasting idea would play in a four-bar antecedent). They might then understand this as a deformational compound antecedent of a possible compound period.[15]

This hypothesis gains credence as soon as mm. 9–10 begin, for it immediately becomes evident that the opening material is returning. Thus, a listener might project that they are in the midst of a compound consequent, and that the ongoing unit will be five bars long again, as indeed it turns out to be. **Example 5** shows the continuation of the compound consequent as it first appears in the étude's A section. The events are as follows: First, a two-bar model sequence (mm. 14–15), then a pre-dominant push towards a cadence (m. 16), and the attainment of a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ (m. 17). This yields the ending's first big twist: the dominant does not resolve. It is succeeded by a vi chord, but this is not even a deceptive cadence, because it is not a cadence at all. The vi

[15] Although James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy developed the idea of deformation for discussions of large-scale form (2006), Hepokoski has endorsed the idea that dialogic approach to analyzing musical form (of which the idea of deformation is a part) should apply to small-scale form as well as large-scale form (2009), and the idea has already been applied to small-scale metric structures by Brad Osborn (2013).



Example 6. Compound consequent's continuation in A' section (mm. 67–78).

chord is on a weak beat. Instead, this is the first leg of yet another two-bar sequence (mm. 18–19).

There are multiple ways to interpret what happens in mm. 20–21, of which I will consider three. The first and simplest reading is to interpret the chord in m. 20 as another cadential $\frac{6}{4}$, which "resolves" back to a root-position tonic (m. 21). The theme's final "cadence" is therefore really a non-cadence, with the role of the dominant fulfilled by that lowly $\frac{6}{4}$ chord instead of by a bona fide V chord.[16] The second reading is to interpret the chord in m. 20 as a (non-cadential) I $\frac{6}{4}$ chord.[17] Under this interpretation, mm. 20–21 form a tonic prolongation, rather than a dominant-to-tonic progression.[18] The third reading also suggests that mm. 20–21 form a tonic prolongation, but suggests that the true bass of m. 20 is already $\hat{1}$, even though it occurs off the beat. This is made plausible by the precedent set in mm. 18–19, in which one is surely tempted to say the bass notes of the chords on the first beats are B and G♯ respec-

[16] This non-cadence could perhaps be understood as an example of what Caplin calls "prolongational closure" (2018, 14–26; 2024, 346–348). I write "perhaps" because the examples of prolongational closure that Caplin provides are ones in which the penultimate chord is a dominant-functioning chord that has $\hat{7}$ or $\hat{2}$, but not necessarily $\hat{5}$(in the bass or inner voices), whereas this is a case where there is indeed $\hat{5}$, but no $\hat{7}$ or $\hat{2}$ in the inner voices.

[17] For more on the phenomenon of the non-cadential tonic $\frac{6}{4}$, see Temperley 2017 (2–11). It should be noted, however, that none of his examples have this sort of progression (i.e. a I $\frac{6}{4}$ resolving to a I $\frac{5}{3}$). Potentially more apropos is Robert Hatten's (1994) idea of an "arrival $\frac{6}{4}$," as adapted by Ji Yeon Lee to apply specifically to cases where the chord "[a]ppears as V $\frac{6}{4}$, but turns into I $\frac{6}{4}$ by abandoning the assumed cadential agenda" (2023, 370).

[18] This is Rothstein's (1989, 224–226) reading, although he takes it even further by interpreting mm. 17–21 as one long tonic prolongation.

tively, not F♯ and D♯. Since m. 20 does not have a dominant function in readings two and three and is instead the onset of a tonic prolongation, someone subscribing to either of those readings would have to locate some non-tonic chord prior to m. 20 that resolves in m. 20. The nearest option, of course, is the IV chord ending m. 19, in which case the concluding progression is a plagal cadence. If one insists on a dominant chord instead, one has to go all the way back to the $^{6}_{4}$ chord leading to the V chord in mm. 17–18. It remains an open question whether either of these possibilities—a plagal cadence or a dominant separated from its tonic resolution by an intervening vi–iii–IV progression—provides a stronger sense of closure than the progression perceived in the first reading, which has direct motion $\hat{5}$-to-$\hat{1}$ in the bass although it lacks cadential content in the harmonization.

Someone ambivalent about these readings (more likely an analyst rather than a first-time listener) might seek assistance from the way these bars are altered in the closing bars of the étude (the A´ section), shown in **Example 6**, but the ambivalence is likely to remain. The role played by m. 20 is now filled by four bars (mm. 73–76), which oscillate between the $^{6}_{4}$ chord (or I chord, in the third reading, in which the E is treated as the true bass) and ii$^{\varnothing 4}_{3}$ (or ii$^{\varnothing 4}_{2}$, in the third reading) before the quasi-resolution to the root-position tonic chord in the final measure. This revised progression is easily malleable to all three competing interpretations of the prolongation. In the first reading, the wavering between these two chords is prolongation of the dominant-functioning $^{6}_{4}$. In the second reading, the half-diminished chord is likely interpreted as having subdominant function rather than predominant function, participating in a tonic prolongation. And in the third reading (in which E is the true bass), the half-diminished chord occurs over a tonic pedal, making it even more clearly an agent of tonic prolongation.

In sum, the main melody's ending is awash with ambiguity. The ambiguity expressed by this ending is in keeping with the formal ambiguity manifest throughout the theme. Such formal ambiguity does not always survive the addition of lyrics, as the structural relationships between words are rarely as fuzzy. Whether one word rhymes with another is a much plainer matter than whether one musical idea derives from another, as long as one is operating in a genre such as this in which near rhymes and slant rhymes are never allowed to substitute for exact rhymes. And what constitutes a grammatical clause is usually less contentious than what constitutes a musical phrase. This grants two great powers to the proceeding lyrics: to adjudicate between already present possibilities and to introduce new ones.

2. "Reviens mon amour"

Before we leap into the lyrics of "Reviens mon amour," we must first consider the differences that arise from Mario Melfi's rearrangement of Chopin's melody. Melfi hybridizes the A and A´ versions. He begins with the compound antecedent from mm. 1–8 of the étude, but instead of using the compound consequent from the A section (mm. 9–21), he uses the compound consequent from the A´ section (mm. 62–77). His arrangement is also unambiguous about what the true bass note is after the model sequence: it is î. In the published sheet music and in both of the 1939 recordings (his and Bruno Clair's), one can see/hear î in the bass on the downbeats. This fact will be reflected in the analyses in the rest of this article.

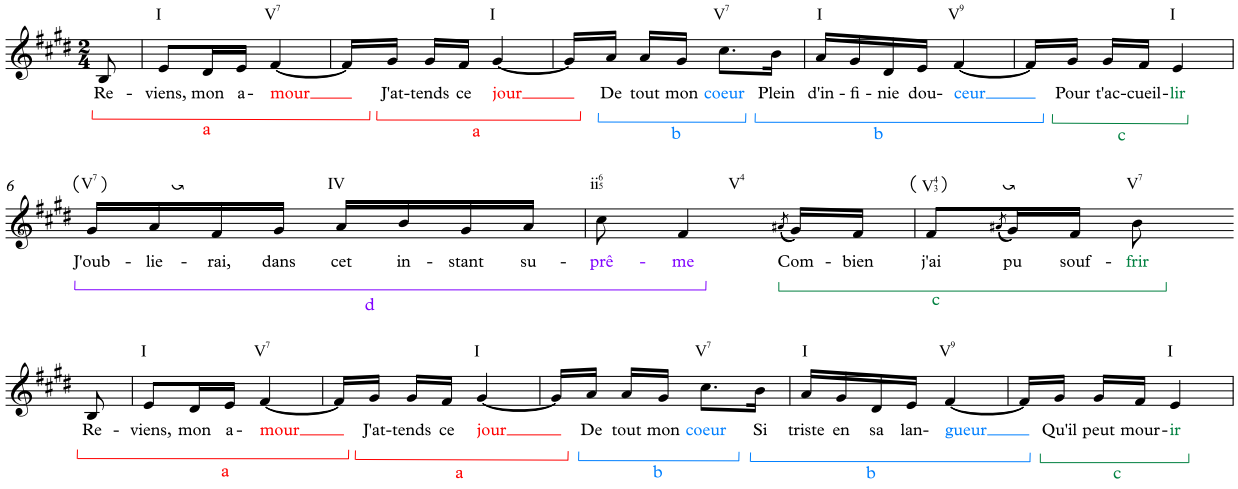
In the figures that follow, I make the following notational choices for ease of comparison between the three versions of the melody (Chopin, French, and English): (1) I do not include the instrumental intros added in the pop versions; nor do I count them in the measure numbers. (They are inconsistent across sheet music and recordings: the sheet music of "Reviens mon amour" and "So Deep Is the Night" have four-bar intros; both Bruno Clair and Mario Melfi's recordings have much longer intros.) I treat the first measure of the vocal parts as the first measure of the song, so it aligns with the étude. (2) Although "Reviens mon amour" and "So Deep Is the Night" were both published in E-flat major, rather than E major, I maintain E major. (3) Although the published versions of "Reviens mon amour" and "So Deep Is the Night" double the note values of Chopin's original (but not the meter, which remains $\frac{2}{4}$), I have kept Chopin's original values.

Example 7 shows the published lyrics of "Reviens mon amour" (side by side with an English translation by me) with the rhyme scheme indicated by letter labels.[19] **Example 8** shows the first three quarters of the melody (mm. 1–13) together with the French lyrics and the same letter labels and color-coding as in Example 7. I do not recommend beginning by listening to either of the premiere recordings of the song—Bruno Clair's or Mario Melfi with Bernardi. Although the cover of the sheet music states "crée at enregistré sur disque Pathé PA 1669 par Bruno

[19] The annotations mark only exact rhymes, not near rhymes or slant rhymes. Consequently, the "-our" (or IPA: ʊʁ) sound that ends (e.g.) "amour" is treated as entirely distinct from the "-oeur" (or IPA: œʁ) sound that ends (e.g.) "coeur," even though these sounds are the most similar pair of rhyming sounds in the song. While a listener or analyst might exploit this similarity to reach additional hermeneutic conclusions, I have chosen not to do this for the sake of limiting the scope of this analysis and because the difference in these sounds is likely to be less distinct to a non-native speaker of French than to a native speaker. (Failing to tell apart French's various subtly different vowels is one of the characteristic markers of an outsider.)

French:	**English:** (translation mine)
Reviens, mon amour (a)	Return, my love
J'attends ce jour (a)	I await the day
De tout mon cœur (b)	With all my heart
Plein d'infinie douceur (b)	Full of infinite sweetness
Pour t'accueillir (c)	To welcome you
J'oublierai dans cet instant suprême (d)	In that supreme moment, I will forget
Combien j'ai pu souffrir (c)	How much I have suffered
Reviens, mon amour (a)	Return, my love
J'attends ce jour (a)	I await the day
De tout mon cœur (b)	With all my heart
Si triste en sa langueur (b)	So sad in its languor
Pour t'accueillir (c)	To welcome you
Il n'est pas, sans toi que j'aime (d)	Without you, my beloved, there is not
Un seul jour, une heure même (d)	A single day, or even an hour,
Où vers toi, tout vibran du désir (c)	When, trembling with the desire
De te chérir (c)	To cherish you,
Je dis sans retour (a)	I do not call out to you:
Reviens, mon amour (a)	Return, my love
De tout mon cœur (b)	With all my heart
J'attends ce jour (a)	I await the day

Example 7. Marietti and Viaud's printed lyrics to "Reviens mon amour".



Example 8. "Reviens mon amour," mm. 1–13.

Clair" ("created and recorded on disc Pathé PA 1669 by Bruno Clair")—therefore leading one to expect the sheet music and recording to match—the lyrics that Clair and Bernardi sing do, in fact, differ from the sheet music in places. To hear the printed lyrics for mm. 1–13, I recommend listening to Beniamino Gigli's 1948 recording (**Audio Example 2**). (Even though Gigli's French pronunciation is dubious at times, his most questionable pronunciations take place only within lines and do not affect the rhyme scheme.)

Audio Example 2. Beniamino Gigli's recording of "Reviens mon amour," mm. 1–13.

In the first five bars of the melody, Marietti and Viaud employ the rhyme scheme AABBC. When examining the music alone, expansion and extension both seemed like viable explanations for this phrase's asymmetry. But these lyrics seem to endorse extension: because the rhyme words mark off regular one-bar intervals, none of the units feels expanded; and the rhyme scheme marks the fifth bar as an appendage because it does not match with anything that comes before. This sense of interloping is also reinforced by the syntax of this stanza (here, consulting Example 8 is clearest): the first four lines express a complete thought; removing the fifth line ("Pour t'accueillir" / "To welcome you") would change the stanza's meaning but would not produce an ungrammatical sentence (in either French or English). This isolation—sonic and grammatical—creates a need for the word "accueillir" to acquire a partner, which a listener might expect to occur at the end of the compound antecedent.[20]

That does indeed occur in m. 8. But now a different line-ending word has been left hanging: "suprême" (m. 7), which is marked as "D" in the rhyme scheme. Besides being unpaired, "suprême" is also notable for its placement. It comes one-and-a-half bars after the previous rhyme, thus breaking the pattern of one rhyme per bar. This disrupts the song's "rhyme rhythm" (Lawrence 2024a): a phenomenon that is to lyrics as harmonic rhythm is to music—not the pace at which notes move, but the pace at which "events" occur. Squeezing together rhymes at one juncture can create tension, and spacing out rhymes can create relaxation, just as hastening or slackening harmonic rhythm respectively increases or decreases tension. In the case of these opening bars, broadening the space between C and D in the rhyme scheme relaxes the music, creating a bit of breathing room.

We might pause at this moment to consider the lyrics sung on the premiere recording by Bruno Clair.[21] **Example 9** presents my transcription of them, alongside a translation, with the changed lines bolded. The reader is invited to compare this with Example 8, which will allow them to see that the printed rhyme scheme has been preserved, further cementing this as a key feature of Marietti and Viaud's analysis of Chopin's melody. They can then listen to Bruno Clair sing these alternate lyrics in **Audio Example 3**. The point about how the grammar of this stanza abets a sense of extension (rather than expansion) in m. 5 remains supported by the alternate lyrics, as "Pour te chérir" (like "Pour t'accueillir") is syntactically unnecessary for the first stanza, even if it is semantically significant.

Audio Example 3. Bruno Clair's recording of "Reviens mon amour," mm. 1–13.

As might be expected, the rhyme scheme of mm. 9–13 is a perfect copy of the one in mm. 1–4 (see Example 8). In fact, the first three bars have not merely the same scheme, but also the same lyrics. It is therefore mm. 14–24 that provide the most interest, as was the case in our formal analysis of Chopin's two versions of the consequent's continuation. **Example 10** shows four versions of this phrase: the printed version, what is sung by Gigli (which differs only in the final four bars), and two different ways of construing what is sung by Clair, which differ from the printed version and Gigli's in mm. 16 and then handles the final four bars as Gigli does). The performances of Gigli and Clair respectively may be found in **Audio Example 4**. I personally favor the reading in Example 10c over the one in Example 10d. That is, I do not think that the "coeur" in m. 15 was meant to be understood as part of the rhyme scheme, as the lyric variants have preserved the rhyme scheme (i.e. the analysis of the melody) in all other respects, and this granular level of internal rhyme seems out of keeping with the approach of the rest of the song. (Example 10d has one minor implication that I will consider in the closing paragraph of this section.)

Audio Example 4a. Beniamino Gigli's recording of "Reviens mon amour," mm. 14–24.

Audio Example 4b. Bruno Clair's recording of "Reviens mon amour," mm. 14–24.

Let us start with what is consistent among them. The first two legs of the sequence (mm. 14–15) finally provide rhyming words ("j'aime" and "même") for "suprême," which had been suffering in seclusion since m. 7. We could think of this as merely a matter of economizing: why use a new sound for this double-syllable rhyme when we have a perfectly serviceable (as yet unrhymed) double-syllable word ready to hand? But the return of "-ême/-aime" (IPA: ɛ.mə),

[20] In their comments on an earlier version of this article, an anonymous reader for this journal came to a different conclusion. They suggested that although the rhyme scheme supports an extension-based reading (as I have suggested), the syntax better supports an expansion-based reading. Their logic is that even though the first four lines could stand alone syntactically (if the fifth line did not exist), the addition of the fifth line produces a new syntactic structure in which all five lines are syntactically necessary. Because the added fifth line is now integral, it feels like part of an expansion rather than an optional extension. Even if I do not personally agree with this logic, I nonetheless embrace this as a way of integrating the parameters of rhyme and poetic syntax into the analysis of musical syntax.

[21] These are also sung by Bernardi on Melfi's recording, although he sings only the compound consequent.

French:	**English:** (translation mine)
Reviens, mon amour (a)	Return, my love
J'attends ce jour (a)	I await the day
De tout mon cœur (b)	With all my heart
Espère ce bonheur (b)	I hope for the happiness
Pour te chérir (c)	Of cherishing you
J'oublierai dans cet instant suprême (d)	In that supreme moment, I will forget
Combien j'ai pu souffrir (c)	How much I have suffered
Reviens, mon amour (a)	Return, my love
J'attends ce jour (a)	I await the day
De tout mon cœur (b)	With all my heart
Si triste **oh ma douceur (b)**	So sad, oh my sweet,
Qu'il peut mourir (c)	That it might die
Il n'est pas, sans toi que j'aime (d)	Without you, my beloved, there is not
Un seul jour, une heure même (d)	A single day, or even an hour,
Où **mon cœur** tout vibran du désir (c)	When my heart, trembling with the desire
De te chérir (c)	To cherish you,
Je dis sans retour (a)	Does not call out to you:
Reviens, mon amour (a)	Return, my love
De tout mon cœur (b)	With all my heart
J'attends ce jour (a)	I await the day
Pour mon amour (a)	For my love

Example 9. Sung lyrics on Bruno Clair's recording of "Reviens mon amour".

or sound D in the rhyme scheme, can also draw attention to the motivic connections between the current sequence and m. 7.

The formal analysis of Chopin's melody in the previous section did not draw motivic connections among the various ideas contained within this theme. However, the motivic derivation of this sequential figure in m. 14 is evident (**Example 11**): the toggling figure on the first beat was introduced in m. 2 (shown by the dotted red line), and the double neighbor figure on the second beat was introduced in m. 6 (shown by the dotted violet line). We have not heard that double neighbor figure since the idea in mm. 6–7, and thus the reappearance of sound D (ɛ.mə) marks a sort of "double return": of both the linguistic rhyme sound and the musical motive associated with those measures.

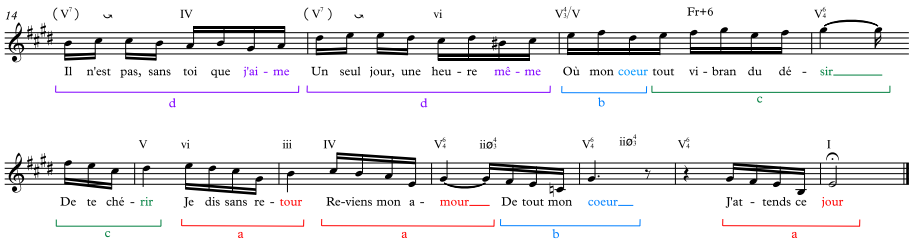
The next sound to return is "-ir" (IPA: iʁ), marked as sound C in the rhyme scheme. It crowns two crucial points of arrival in the push towards the cadence: the $\frac{6}{4}$ chord in m. 17 ("désir") and the V chord in m. 18 ("chérir"). This affords two analytical observations:

1. Sound C has previously been associated only with the ends of formal units (**Example 12**). It previously ended the compound basic idea of the compound antecedent ("t'accueillir" in m. 5), the continuation of that same antecedent ("souffrir" in m. 8), and the compound basic idea of the compound consequent ("mourir" in m. 13) In carrying over this association, the rhyme word abets in the deception wrought by the chords: the false promise they make that the theme will imminently draw to a close.
2. This DDCC rhyme scheme can be understood as the same as the DC rhyme scheme that concludes the compound antecedent, except doubled (**Example 13**). Thus, although my initial analysis treated this entire sequential episode as a notable departure from all the music that came before, the lyrics suggest an alternate reading: that it is an expansion of the end of the compound antecedent.

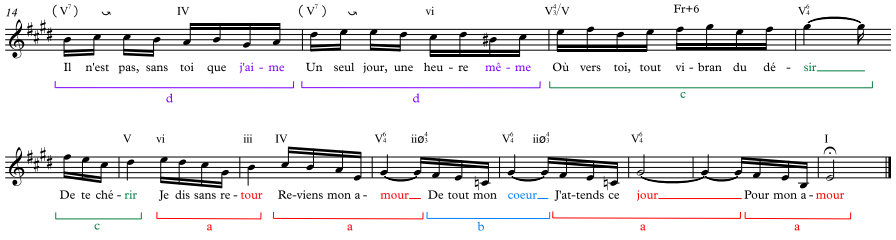
It is fitting that when the push towards the cadence is negated in m. 20, this comes at the hands of rhyme sound A ("-our" or IPA: uʁ), the sound that marked the song's opening idea. Thus, this is a sort of "re-opening" of what should have been the close. It is also fitting that this remembrance of words past is triggered by the word "retour," meaning "return."

All of the remaining lines (except for the last one) are recollections of the song's opening lyrics, except in a slightly scrambled up order (**Example 14**). "De tout mon coeur" (mm. 20–21) now comes before "J'attends ce jour" (mm. 21–22) instead of directly after it (as was the case in mm.

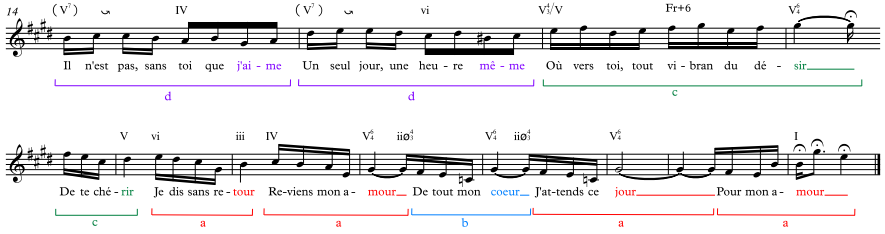
(a) printed



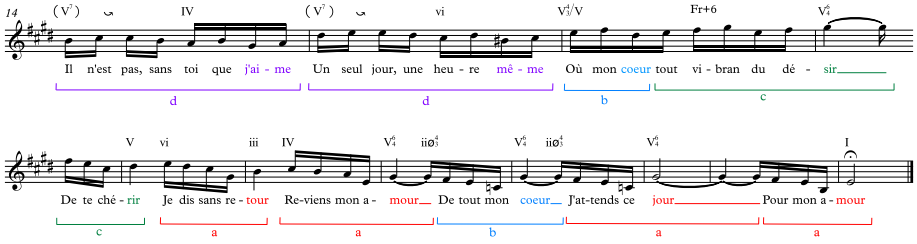
(b) Gigli (1948)



(c) one reading of Clair (1939)



(d) another reading of Clair (1939)



Example 10. Four versions of "Reviens mon amour," mm. 14–24.



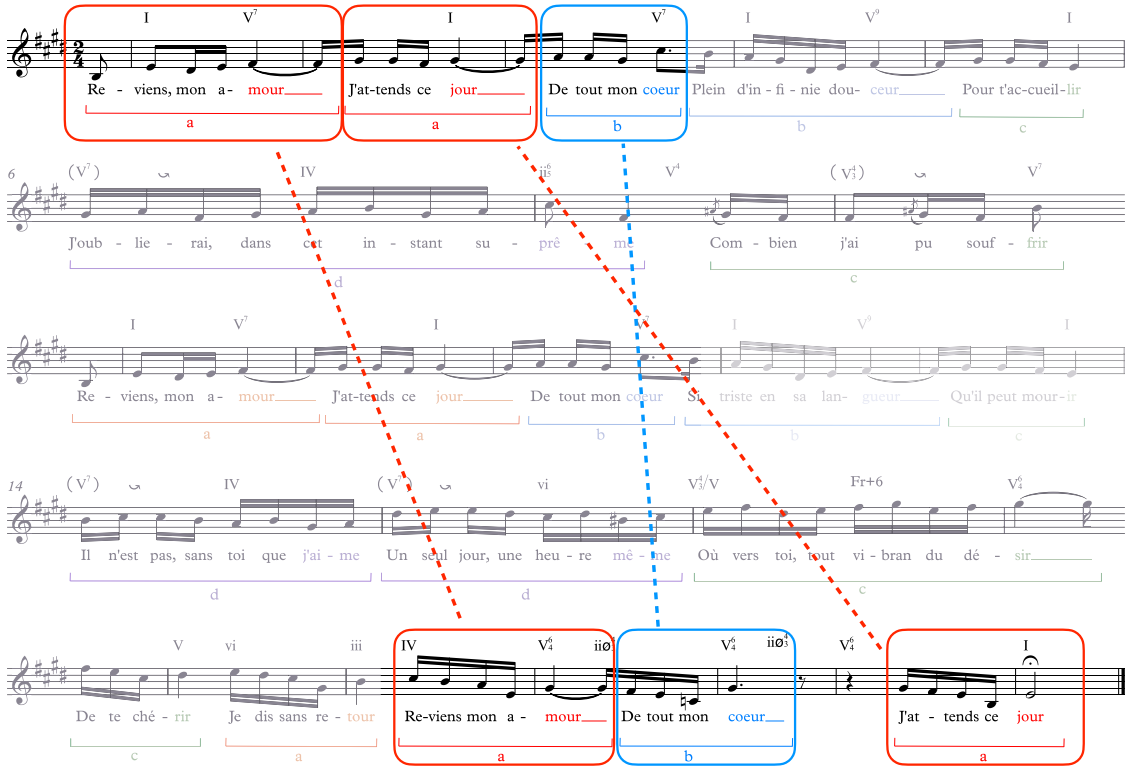
Example 11. Motivic connections in "Reviens mon amours".



Example 12. The occurrences of C in the rhyme scheme of "Reviens mon amour".



Example 13. DC to DDCC in "Reviens mon amour".



Example 14. Return of opening material in "Reviens mon amour".

2–3). Because the former line ends with sound B ("-oeur" or IPA: œʁ), this creates the potential for an unpaired rhyme word. And this is precisely what happens: the word "coeur" (heart) never achieves "douceur" (sweetness), just as the singer's actual heart never reaches the sweetness it longs for. (This feature of these bars is potentially heightened if one is listening to the Clair/Melfi version and interprets it as in Example 10d, in which there are two "coeurs" emitting unanswered cries for a rhyme.) Instead, the song ends with the singer describing themselves as still waiting. This waiting is sealed by the words "J'attends ce jour" in the printed sheet music and by "Pour mon amour" in the sung versions. The effect of the two is the same: the singer (as expressed through the lyrics) fails to achieve emotional closure just as the song fails to achieve the true tonal closure that would be granted by a perfect authentic cadence.

3. "So Deep Is the Night"

Example 15 shows Sonny Miller's complete lyrics to "So Deep Is the Night," with the rhymes labelled according to the same system as before. Because the primary purpose of this article is to show how different rhyme schemes create different analyses, which in turn capitalize on different affordances of the original music, our coverage of the English lyrics will focus on where they diverge from their French counterpart. The first such divergence already occurs in the opening five bars, shown in **Example 16** and sung by John McCormack (1940) in **Audio Example 5**.[22] In "Reviens mon amour," the rhyme scheme was AABBC; in "So Deep Is the Night," it is AAAB. The former has one more letter than the latter. This is because whereas the former unfolded at an even one rhyme word per bar, the latter has no rhyme word in m. 3. Thus, the effect of relaxation that comes from the slackening of rhyme rhythm starts earlier in the English lyrics, and this has the potential to makes m. 4 sound even more like a point of repose, to heighten the sense that m. 5 is just tacked on. It both breaks a chain of only A rhymes and undoes the effect of repose.

Audio Example 5. John McCormack's recording of "So Deep Is the Night," mm. 1–5.

The next three bars more or less follow the model of "Reviens mon amour" (**Example 17**): an unpaired word sits on m. 7, and m. 8 closes off the antecedent with the same

Original:

So deep is the night (a)
No moon tonight (a)
No friendly star to guide me with its light (a)
Be still my heart (b)
Silent lest my love should be returning (c)
From a world far apart (b)

So deep is the night (a)
O lonely night (a)
On broken wings, my heart has taken flight (a)
And left a dream (d)

In my dream our lips are blending (e)
Will my dream be never ending? (e)
Will your mem'ry haunt me till I die? (f)
Alone am I (f)
Deep into the night (a)
Waiting for the light (a)
Alone am I (f)
I wonder why (f)
Deep is the night (a)

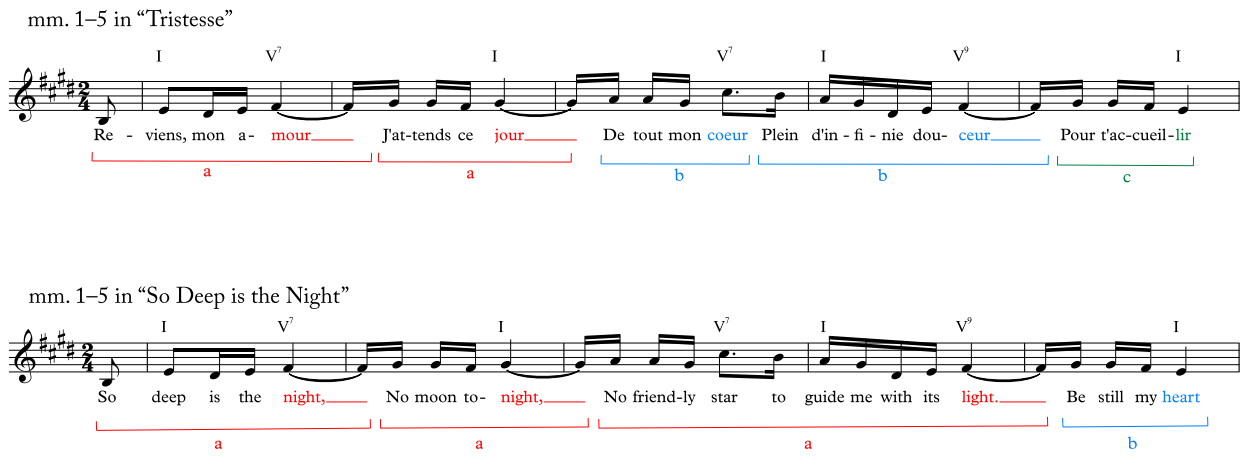
Example 15. Sonny Miller's lyrics to "So Deep Is the Night".

rhyme word that was used in m. 5. A more meaningful alteration occurs in the first five bars of the consequent. In "Tristesse" those bars had the exact same rhyme scheme and rhyme words as the first five bars of the antecedent. But that is not quite the case here in "So Deep Is the Night," in which AAAB has been replaced with AAAD. The rhyme scheme remains the same, but the word "dream" introduces a new sound to the rhyme scheme. In "Reviens mon amour," this moment projected both backwards and forwards: backwards to the other moments with the same rhyme word, and forwards to a potential future word to pair with. Here, the new sound projects only forward, towards the hopeful conclusion of the theme, where one might expect (or at least wish for) another word that will rhyme with "dream" and become another D in the rhyme scheme. There are thus two unpaired letters in the rhyme scheme: C and D.

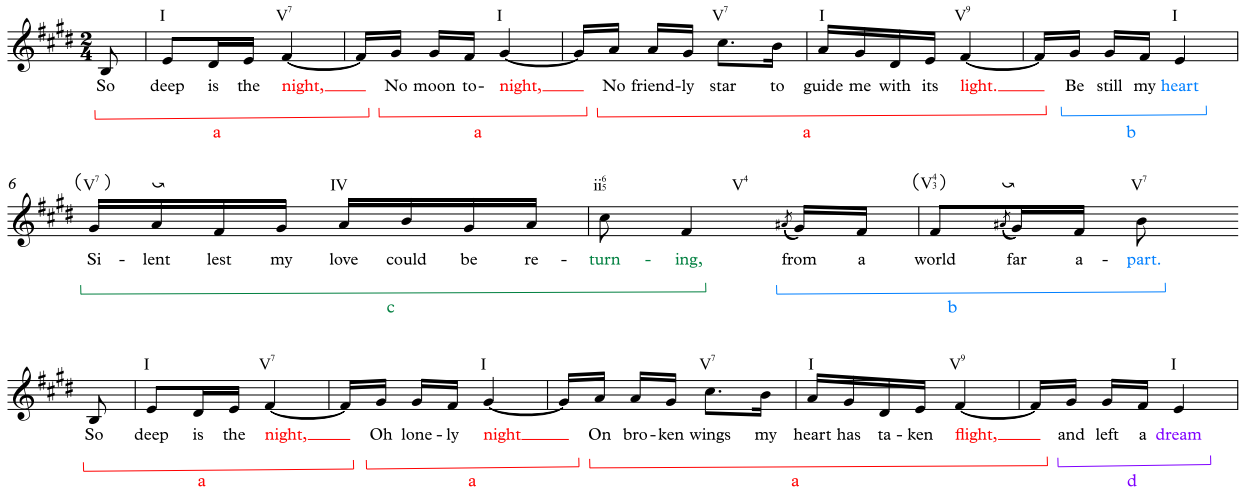
Examples 18 and **19** are color-coded scores for the complete melodies of "Reviens mon amour" and "So Deep Is the Night" respectively.[23] These examples illustrate the stark

[22] I have eschewed using the Hylton/Browne recording of "So Deep Is the Night" since (as mentioned before) its tempo and style are out of keeping with the ballad genre that the song became a part of—indeed, the same ballad genre to which "Reviens mon amour" already belonged.

[23] Once again, I have omitted a consideration of near and slant rhyme. The prohibition in letting these "count" as rhymes is particularly strong in English-language popular song that operates within the songbook tradition, carrying over to musical theater. As Plotkin puts it, "we should treat the primacy of proper rhyme as axiomatic" (2023, 92). One of the readers for this journal has pointed that there is a possibility of hearing an additional rhyme that I have not marked in my color-coding: the repetition of "dream" in mm.



Example 16. Comparison of first five measures of "Reviens mon amour" and "So Deep Is the Night".



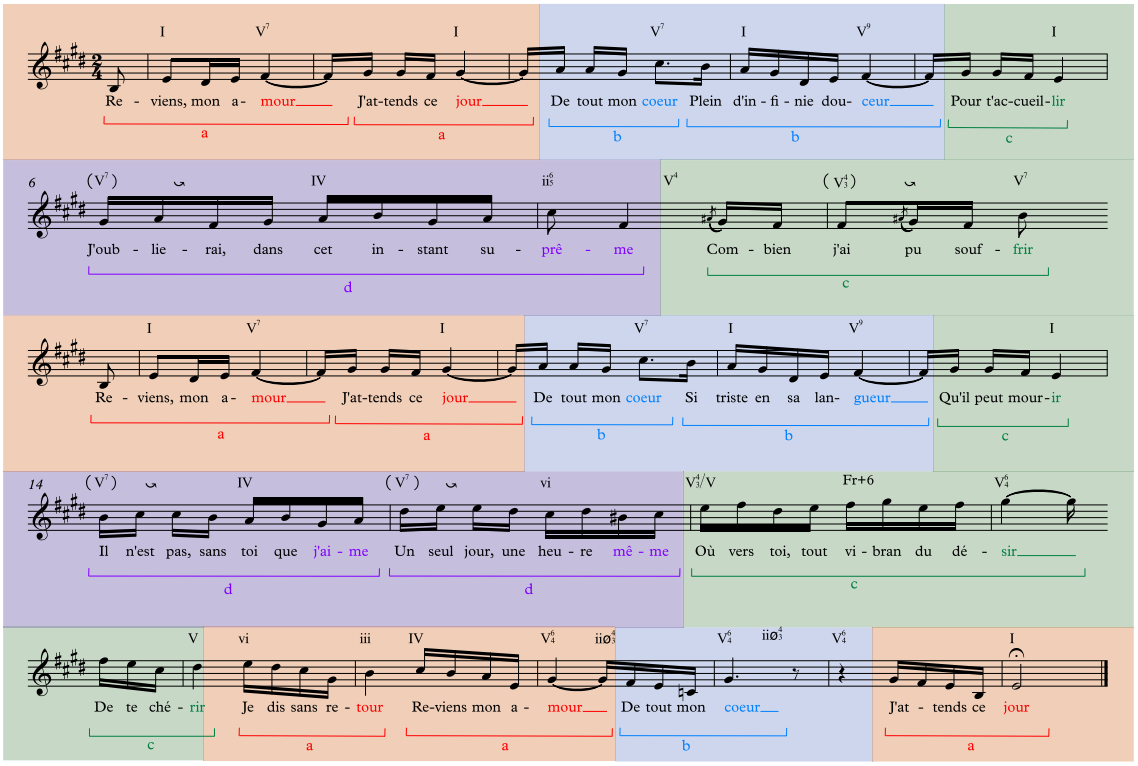
Example 17. "So Deep Is the Night," mm. 1–13.

differences between the song settings, when taken as a whole. First, consider the fate of sounds C and D in the rhyme scheme of "So Deep Is the Night:" nothing comes of them. Appropriately enough, nothing returns for "returning" and "dream" is unfulfilled, thus denying closure to both of those sentiments. Next, consider the sequence in mm. 14–15. (**Audio Example 6** is McCormack's performance of m. 14 to the end.) These measures in "Reviens mon amour" forged a connection with earlier music by using a sound already in the rhyme scheme (D). "So Deep Is the Night" introduces new sounds: the sequence forms the couplet EE in the rhyme scheme. This has the potential to suggest the opposite idea: that the sequence is a departure from everything that has come before. The sense that this music is pushing forward is heightened by the fact that the next three bars introduce yet another rhyme word pair (FF). And yet, the contents of these lines undo the effect of the E couplet. The E couplet burrowed deeper into the singer's dream of being reunited, but the F couplet ends with the words "Alone am I" (mm. 17–18), pulling the singer back into their isolation in the present.

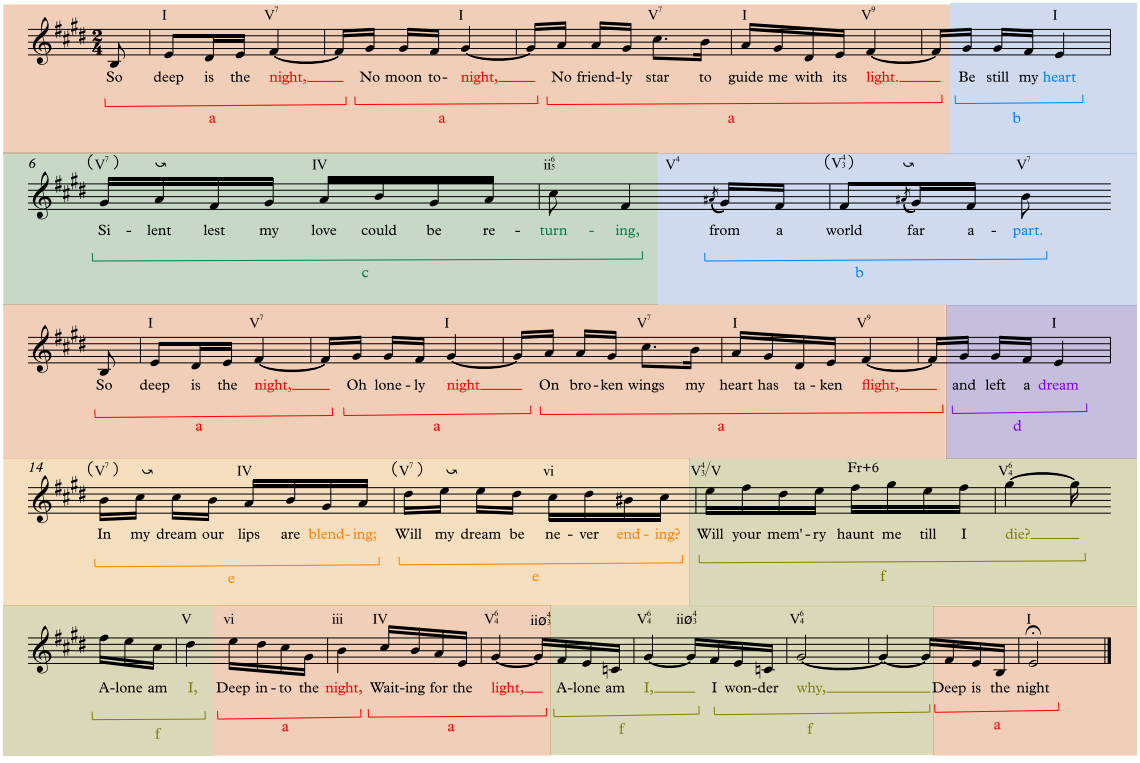
Audio Example 6. John McCormack's recording of "So Deep is the Night," mm. 14–24.

As in the French lyrics, we then get a recollection of the opening. But whereas the French lyrics provide an ex-

13–15 could be interpreted as an example of "linkage technique" / *anadiplosis*, since the same musical figure and the same word ends the compound consequent's c.b.i. and begins its continuation. This would be an echo of the purely musical use of linkage technique in mm. 2–3, which I noted in Footnote 13 of this article. Although this is an interesting reading, I believe that the unusual locations of the appearances of the word "dream" in mm. 14–15 suggest that they were not intended to be heard as part of the overall rhyme scheme.



Example 18. Complete melody of "Reviens mon amour" with color-coding.



Example 19. Complete melody of "So Deep Is the Night" with color-coding.

act reiteration of parts of the opening, these English lyrics transform two phrases from the opening: "So deep is the night" becomes "Deep into the night" (mm. 18–19), and "No friendly star to guide me with his light" becomes "Waiting for the light" (mm. 19–20). In both of these cases, what once were descriptions of the night outside the singer have now become descriptions of the singer's own state. In the final two lines, the singer says, "I wonder why," but then doesn't provide an answer, ending by merely repeating "Deep is the night." This is a perfect lyrical illustration of the harmonic ambiguity in this passage, which features three returns: sonically to rhyme sound A, poetically to the night, and musically to the tonic. None of these returns feels like a true resolution, just a return. Like the French lyrics, this analogizes the absent or weak resolution to finding oneself where one started, except that the English lyrics emphasize a sense of isolation, rather than a sense of waiting.

Conclusion

Having completed our analyses of the étude's theme, its two pop song adaptations, and lyrical variants of one of those songs, it is worth considering what lessons we might take from these songs that can be applied more generally in other analytical endeavors. I propose four: first, the form of Chopin's theme (or of any theme, for that matter) is not one single shape, but is rather the sum of the many possible shapes that the music affords a listener. Second, some of these possible shapes become more perceptible than others, depending on how the music reaches the listener's ears (through what medium, performance, arrangement, etc.). Third, adaptations of classical works therefore have much to teach us about the originals, because they capitalize on affordances that might otherwise have remained dormant. And last, when translations of lyrics alter the rhyme scheme of the original (as is often the case), this affects not only lyrical form but also musical form. Change the words and you change the music.

References

Books and Articles

Alegant, Brian, and Don McLean. 2007. "On the Nature of Structural Framing." *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 4 (1): 3–29.

BaileyShea, Matt. 2021. *Lines and Lyrics: An Introduction to Poetry and Song*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Caplin, William E. 1998. *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2018. "Beyond the Classical Cadence: Thematic Closure in Early Romantic Music." *Music Theory Spectrum* 40 (1): 1–26.

———. 2024. *Cadence: A Study of Closure in Tonal Music*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cone, Edward T. 1977. "Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story—Or a Brahms Intermezzo." *The Georgia Review* 31 (3): 554–574.

Hatten, Robert S. 1994. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hepokoski, James A. 2009. "Sonata Theory and Dialogic Form." In *Musical Form, Forms & Formenlehre: Three Methodological Reflections*, edited by William E. Caplin, James Hepokoski, James Webster, and Pieter Bergé. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Hepokoski, James A., and Warren Darcy. 2006. *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-eighteenth-century Sonata*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jones, Oswald. 1982. *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*. Translated and edited by John Rothgeb. New York: Longman.

Lawrence, John Y. 2020. "Toward a Predictive Theory of Theme Types." *Journal of Music Theory* 64 (1): 1–36.

———. 2024a. "Lyricist as Analyst: Rhyme Scheme as Music-Setting in the Great American Songbook." *Music Theory Spectrum* 46 (1): 1–16.

———. 2024b. Review of *Here for the Hearing: Analyzing the Music in Musical Theater*, edited by Michael Buchler and Gregory J. Decker. *Music Theory Online* 30 (4).

Lee, Ji Yeon. 2023. "The Arrival 6/4 Chord in Wagner's *Die Walküre*: Types, Function, and Dramatic Meanings." *Music Analysis* 42 (3): 363–411.

Maler, Anabel. 2026. "How Sign Language Analyzes Musical Form." *Music Theory Spectrum* 48 (1): 1–18.

Mawer, Deborah. 2014. *French Music and Jazz in Conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Osborn, Brad. 2013. "Subverting the Verse-Chorus Paradigm: Terminally Climactic Forms in Recent Rock Music." *Music Theory Spectrum* 35 (1): 23–47.

Plotkin, Richard. 2023. "A Phenomenological Approach to Music Theater Rhyme." In *Here for the Hearing: Analyzing the Music in Musical Theater*, edited by Michael Buchler, and Gregory J. Decker, 88–112. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Raykoff, Ivan. 2014. *Dreams of Love: Playing the Romantic Pianist*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Richards, Mark. 2016. "Film Music Themes: Analysis and Corpus Study." *Music Theory Online* 22 (1).

Rink, John. 2015. "Chopin's Study in Syncopation." In *Bach to Brahms: Essays on Musical Design and Structure*, edited by

David Beach and Yosef Goldenberg, 132–142. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

Rothgeb, John. 1983. "Thematic Content: A Schenkerian View." In *Aspects of Schenkerian Theory*, edited by David Beach, 39–60. New Haven: Yale University Press.

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

Schenker, Heinrich. 1979. *Free Composition (Der freie Satz)*. Translated and edited by Ernst Oster. 2 vols. New York: Longman.

Tymoczko, Dmitri. 2023. *Tonality: An Owner's Manual*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Temperley, David. 2001. "The Question of Purpose in Music Theory: Description, Suggestion, and Explanation." *Current Musicology* 66: 66–85.

———. 2008. "Hypermetrical Transitions." *Music Theory Spectrum* 30 (2): 305–325.

———. 2017. "The Six-Four as Tonic Harmony, Tonal Emissary, and Structural Cue." *Intégral* 31: 1–25.

Scores

Chopin, Frédéric. 1915. *Etüden für Pianoforte* (Instruktive Ausgabe Von Ignaz Friedman). Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel.

Chopin, Fryderyk. 1949. *Complete Works, Vol. 2: Studies for Piano*. Edited by Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 12th ed. Warsaw: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

Marietti, Jean, André Viaud, and Mario Melfi. 1939. "Reviens, Mon Amour (Tristesse), Tango." Lyrics by Jean Marietti and André Viaud. Arrangment by Mario Melfi. Paris: M. Eschig.

Melfi, Mario, Jean Marietti, André Viand, Sonny Miller, and Frédéric Chopin. 1939. *So Deep Is the Night: Tristesse*. London: Keith Prowse & Co. Ltd.

Recordings

Clair, Bruno 1939. "Reviens mon amour sur la 'Tristesse' de Chopin." Lyrics by André Viaud [sic]. Music by Frédéric Chopin. Arrangement by Mario Melfi. Pathé PA 1669, 78 rpm.

Cool, Harry with Dick Jurgens and His Orchestra. 1940. "So Deep Is the Night (Tristesse) Fox Trot." Lyrics by Al Stillman. Music by Frédéric Chopin. Arrangement by Jacques Dallin. OKeh 5759.

Gigli, Beniamino. 1948. "Reviens mon amour (So deep is the night)." Lyrics by Jean Marietti and André Viaud. Music by Frédéric Chopin. Arrangement by Mario Melfi. His Master's Voice D.A. 1892.

Hylton, Jack and His Orchestra (Vocal Refrain by Sam Browne). 1939. "So Deep Is the Night – Fox-Trot." Lyrics by Jean Marietti and André Viaud. Music by Frédéric Chopin. Arrangement by Mario Melfi. Master's Voice B.D. 5554.

McCormack, John. 1940. "So Deep Is the Night" (Tristesse). Lyrics by Sonny Miller. Music by Frédéric Chopin. Arrangement by Mario Melfi. D.A. 1730.

Melfi, Mario and His Tango Orchestra (with Vocal Refrain). 1939. "Tristesse – Tango" (So Deep Is the Night). Music by Frédéric Chopin. Arrangement by Mario Melfi. His Master's Voice B.D. 752.

Simon, Abbey. 1996. *Abbey Simon Plays Chopin: Etudes and Waltzes* (*Complete*). VoxBox – CDX 5167.

———. 2014. *Frédéric Chopin: Etudes, Nocturnes, & Waltzes Performed by Abbey Simon*. Basilica Music.

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 104–109

Conference Report: *Harvard University Graduate Music Forum Conference: "TRANS∗Media"*

by Stephen Tian-You Ai and Christina Misaki Nikitin

Introduction

From February 28th to March 1st, 2025, the Harvard University Department of Music's Graduate Music Forum held its annual graduate conference with the theme, "TRANS∗Media." As the organizers of the 2025 conference, we sought to build on momentum generated by recent panels addressing trans issues at major U.S./Canadian music studies conferences and provide a dedicated setting for such conversations.[1] We welcomed sixty attendees and hosted sixteen papers and performances by graduate students and early professionals, representing twelve institutions, five countries, and nine disciplines. The conference featured a keynote address by McKenzie Wark (The New School); a video screening by Nguyễn Tân Hoàng (University of California, San Diego); a roundtable discussion featuring Kaleb Goldschmitt (Wellesley College), Julián X. Latshang (Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences), and Stephan Pennington (Tufts University); and a concert by percussion-piano quartet Yarn/Wire featuring compositions by the Harvard Group for New Music. The conference was supported financially by the Harvard University Department of Music and the Open Gate Foundation.[2] The full program may be found here.[3]

The conference theme, "TRANS∗Media," sought to explore the meanings bound in the prefix "trans-"—conveying "across, through, over, to or on the other side of, beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing, or state to another" (*OED*, n.d.)—as it pertains to sounding media, with a marked emphasis on transsexual and transgender musicalities, experiences, and lives. The title itself alluded to several texts that demarcated the central line of inquiry. First, we took inspiration from Susan Stryker's movement-oriented formulation of "transgender" in *Transgender History* as "people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth" (2008, 1). The asterisk, which first emerged in online gender-community spaces (see Tompkins 2014), was taken from Jack Halberstam's *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. As Halberstam explains, "the asterisk holds off the certainty of [gender] diagnosis; it keeps at bay any sense of know-

[1] Our sincere thanks go to the junior scholars who organized groundbreaking conference panels committed to trans subjectivities and musicalities in the past several years, bringing forth innovative scholarship, critical dialogues, and intellectual networks that provided the blueprint for our conference. We were particularly inspired by the following: "Listening for Queer and Trans Lives" at the 2022 American Musicological Society–Society for Ethnomusicology–Society for Music Theory (AMS-SEM-SMT) Joint Annual Meeting in New Orleans, LA; "Transauralities: Thinking Trans in Music/Sound Studies" at the 2023 AMS–SMT Joint Annual Meeting in Denver, CO; "Partying on the Periphery: Global Queer/Trans Nightlives" at the virtual 2024 SEM Annual Meeting; "Listening Trans and Trans Listening: Approaches to Music Analysis" at the 2024 SMT Annual Meeting in Jacksonville, FL; and "Voicing Trans/Queer Musical Dialogues" at 2024 Feminist Theory and Music 17 (2024) in Ann Arbor, MI, among many others.

[2] We would like to thank the editors of *Intégral*—Kaylee Bernard, Maeve Gillen, and Ryan Jones—for their interest in having us publish a report on this conference. We are especially grateful to Maeve, who reached out as an attendee that advocated for the importance of documenting this event for the benefit of the broader academic community, and who provided invaluable feedback and guidance throughout the editorial process.
[3] Our many thanks to Sam Huber for his exceptional design work on this conference program book.

ing in advance what the meaning of this or that gender variant form may be, and perhaps most importantly, it makes trans* people the authors of their own categorizations" (2018, 4). Notably, this asterisk also appears in Dana Baitz's "Toward a Trans* Method in Musicology," which differentiates a trans* musicological approach from a queer one by its interest in "investing in the body" (2018, 371) as a primary locus of knowledge production. Lastly, the title makes reference to "transmedia storytelling" as coined by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, which describes a technique that unfolds a story "across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (2006, 95–6). By employing the lithographical flourish of the centered asterisk (∗) over the raised one (*), we bypass a visual shorthand that risks flattening "trans" into a categorical umbrella and orient our critical inquiry on the movements afforded by the asterisk's open-ended variation.

With these competing perspectives on trans∗ in mind, the conference sought to engage with two principal questions with a particular focus on transgender and transsexual experiences and musicalities: How does sound move across, between, and beyond media? And how does sound move media?

This capacious framing of trans∗—from movement to diagnosis to attitude to media system—foregrounded a critical tension in trans studies between trans-as-identity and trans-as-method. On one hand, trans-as-identity is concerned with trans life, speaking to the desires, feelings, legacies, and knowledges of trans individuals and communities. On the other hand, trans-as-method takes full embrace of the prefix's ability to animate boundary crossing (e.g., transnational, transdisciplinary, transspecies) to invent alternative ways of knowing. The former has been criticized for a return to essentialism and an overreliance on the human figure (Halberstam 2022), while the latter has been charged with extracting the prefixal "trans-" at the expense of transgender and transsexual people (Chu and Drager 2019; Amin 2023). Through this conference, we aimed to bring this important conversation to the field of music studies by selecting a wide range of papers on this spectrum. As the organizers, we felt that music and sound—always political, slippery in its representation, and often abstract—had and will continue to have much to say in this ongoing debate.

1. Trans∗ Bodies and Voices

Given trans studies' foundational understanding that bodies and technologies are always already enmeshed (see Sullivan & Murray 2016; Gill-Peterson 2014), it was unsurprising that the majority of conference papers focused on unpacking the technological capacity, mediation, and intervention of trans bodies and voices. Notably, such technologies circumscribe the material conditions of trans life, employed by trans subjects in variable practices of disclosure which seek social recognition through a performance of gender (in)authenticity.

Keaton Ireland (New York University) and Noah Witke Mele (New York University) dealt explicitly with medical transition in their analysis of Arca's *Mutant;Destrudo* (2023), which features the Venezuelan experimental artist's transfeminine body adorned with a prosthetic transmasculine body suit. For Ireland and Mele, Arca's obfuscation of dominant medical and social narratives of transition—is Arca here male-to-female or female-to-male?—reveals prosthetic technologies as experimental enactions on an always-already synthetic sex/gender system. Turning to the dysphoric and transitioning trans voice, Dani Heffernan (University of California, Los Angeles) examined voice feminization exercises performed by multiple transfeminine speakers in Sarah Hennies's multimedia work *Contralto* (2017), demonstrating how the piece transforms vocal dysphoria from an individual concern into a collective affective experience. In a moment of conferencing serendipity, multimedia artist and producer ILĀ (ilā kamalagharan, Moth Quantum), supported by Coda Nicolaeff (TRANS VOICES), instantiated such a collective affective experience of vocal euphoria and dysphoria in a live choral performance of *RECURSE* (2025). This was achieved by employing machine-learning model Neutone, which blended ILĀ's voice with those of the UK-based gender-diverse choir, TRANS VOICES.

Moving beyond the sounded, embodied voice to issues of authorial voice, several papers considered how trans∗ is strategically envoiced within normative structures. Vik J. Squires (Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne) presented an interpretative phenomenological analysis of Australia's predominantly cismale and largely transphobic metal scene. Squires highlighted how the scene's embrace of the "social outcast" both facilitated gender experimentation and eventual coming out of two transwomen performers. Identifying a similar negotiation in queer and trans electronic music scenes, Lily Shababi (University of California, Los Angeles) shed light on the ways in which trans hyperpop artists employ experimental production technologies to defy the music industry's attempts to codify and capture the genre. Finally, Euge Helyantus Stumm (University of Miami) examined the development of Pajubá—a cryptolect combining Yoruba, French, Italian, and English developed by *travesti* sex workers in Brazil—and its expressive capacity as a weapon for survival and a musical language in Brazilian Funk. For Stumm, Pajubá's power lies in its flexibility and

continuous evolution; upon capture by the mainstream, it evolves further, maintaining its ability to function as linguistic resistance.

2. Trans∗ Archive and Memory

Another major theme that arose was the question of how trans histories are written, preserved, and reclaimed. In a current political climate that insists on trans disappearance, a very few number of visible archives that elegize trans subjects' pasts have been used to construct narratives—for better or for worse—of tragic victimhood, romantic resistance, and so on. How does one remember in such destitute conditions? What other material, affective, and sonic media can hold such memories?

Drawing from a kaleidoscopic collection of various media in sonic collage, Luz Chávez (Independent) presented a trans critique of the home through creative accumulation, exploring the ways in which trans people navigate and struggle against cisheteropatriarchal norms to refashion the home as a space of radical care. Similarly, Morgan Bates (University of California, Los Angeles) examined how Angélica Negrón's ethereal cinematic opera *The Island We Made* (2021) mobilizes the figure of the drag mother (played by Sasha Velour) to destabilize normative time and space by evoking nostalgia through uncanny and ethereal audiovisual representations of home. Dan Levy (McGill University) conducted close readings of scenes from the coming-of-age film *I Saw the TV Glow* (2024), attending to the film's careful curation and compilation of "sad songs" in forming a t4t ("trans-for-trans") care that reaches out of the screen and into the contested homes of trans audiences. Broaching the unwanted intrusion of HIV/AIDS remembrance into the patriarchal home by Brendan Maclean's infamous and raunchy *House of Air* (2017), Jo Michael Rezes (Tufts University) engaged with virality, both digital and biological, to place humor and camp at the heart of queer remembrance and survival.

While such visible representations of trans memory in film and opera houses are certainly to be celebrated, Alejandrina M. Medina (University of California, San Diego) reminded us that such works, which represent the completion of an artistic process, are easily co-opted by logics of productivity and extraction. Analyzing staged performances of getting ready by artist Mark Aguhar, Medina argued for an attention to the quotidian labor that anticipates and prepares transfeminine life, drawing out the crucial role of "feminine indolence" in staving off inevitable ends. Kelsey "Chloë" Sucena (Alfred University) also issued a word of caution on the subject of documenting trans lives, meditating on Susan Sontag's (1977) condemnation of photography as a tool of masculine, colonial domination. Declaring that "my camera is a pussy," Sucena re-embraces the analog camera, which escapes digital regimes of surveillance, and in doing so, refigures photography as a medium of connection, care, and historical preservation for her trans community.[4]

3. Trans∗ Relationality

The remaining papers took a broader approach to trans∗ and considered how a wider purview can shape our attitudes and relationships toward surrounding media ecologies and natural environments. Sergio De Iudicibus (Yale University) analyzed the opening scene of the Netflix series *You* (2018) by way of an imaginative re-reading of the Narcissus myth, emphasizing the power of the disembodied voice to inhabit different bodies—especially of gender and age—and beckon the spectator to "drown in" the screen. By theorizing a transvocal system that renders the boundary between reality and screen porous, De Iudicibus drew out the larger stakes of such immersion, particularly in relation to lip-synced TikTok audios and AI-generated voices that have come to characterize our media soundscape. Mayank Dutt Kaushik (Jawaharlal Nehru University) went beyond screen media to theorize the transsensorial system of extended reality (XR), mixed reality (MR), augmented reality (AR), and AI-driven platforms. For Kaushik, because of XR/MR/AR/AI's ability to create narrative agency through sensorial immersion, this transsensorial system offers innovative ways to rethink identity and freedom for the trans subject. Steve 4. Tu (University of Toronto) presented a multispecies ethnography developing a practice of transspecies and transnational listening and pedagogy by blending Salomé Voegelin's (2010) concept of listening as transformative engagement with Daoist notions of harmony and flow. This practice attunes to other-than-human stories, allowing Tu to delaminate accumulated histories of colonial domination from Indigenous histories on his own campus's green spaces. Finally, Fabricio Cavero Farfan (University of California, Irvine) performed a fragment of his transmedial opera *The Primeval Poet*, which blends inherited Precolumbian Andean clay technology with modern audio equipment to restore and eulogize an Indigenous American academe that learned and listened alongside sacred plants in ritual, study, and everyday life.

4. Video Screening: "An Accented Pornography"

The first day concluded with a screening of experimental videos by Nguyễn Tân Hoàng (University of California,

[4] See Sucena (2025) for a published version of this presentation.

San Diego) titled "An Accented Pornography,"[5] showcasing works from various stages of their career as video artist and scholar, including *K.I.P.* (2002), *look_im_azn* (2011), *Sad Porn Circa 1994* (2025), *Oriental Hardon* (2025), and *The Lesbian Hand* (in-progress). Through this curated selection of works, Nguyễn explored effeminized portrayals of Asian and Asian-American men in gay pornography to reformulate Asian male "bottomhood" as an oppositional worldview and tactic with the power to destabilize sexual, gender, and racial norms.

Nguyễn proposed "accented pornography" as a mode of listening that hears the soft, hesitant, and at times unintelligible vocalizations of Asian "bottom" actors not merely as stereotypical markers, but as affective expressions that legitimize an alternative sexual subject-position within Orientalist gay fantasies.[6] They also traced the historical specificity of these sexualized and racialized subjectivities, examining the shifting formulations of Asian male feminization against the sociopolitical backdrops of the Vietnam War, the gay liberation movement, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The critical role of the archive in documenting queer and trans histories was made tactile in *Oriental Hardon* (2025), which featured mail-order nude snapshots of anonymous Asian men in hotel rooms from the 1980s and 1990s, sourced from the University of South Florida's "The Asian Male Nude Collection." Transposing Tina M. Campt's (2017) theoretical framework of "listening to images" into practice, Nguyễn synced the visual progression of the photos to a cacophonous soundscape of analog and digital technology (e.g., fax machines, dial-up modems), attuning to the material frictions of the archive as a site of preservation and de-generation.

Following the screening, a talkback was moderated by Graduate Music Forum member Eloy Ramirez (Harvard University), who guided a dynamic conversation on the superimposition of colonial violence and phallic aggression within many of Hoàng's archival pieces, in addition to expanding upon the potential of pornography as a medium for reclaiming "bottomhood" as a site of "active receptivity" (Nguyễn 2014). The event closed with a Q&A session, during which Nguyễn provided practical advice for junior scholars navigating institutional backlash amidst rising anti-DEI policies, ultimately demonstrating how transmedia frameworks can unsettle the white, cisheteronormative gaze both in the archive and within the academy.

[5] Please note that the title of the screening was changed from the one listed in the official program.

[6] See Nguyễn (2014), which builds upon Hamid Naficy's (2001) theory of "accented cinema" to examine portrayals of "fresh off the boat" Asian actors in gay pornography.

5. Keynote: "Rave | Practice"

McKenzie Wark (The New School), writer and critical theorist with particular interests in media theory, trans studies, Marxist criticism, and the Anthropocene, delivered the keynote address, "Rave | Practice."[7] Known for her deeply personal, self-reflexive, and conceptually rigorous writing style which she terms "critical (auto) theory," Wark presented a rich autoethnographic account of New York's underground rave scenes.[8] Expanding upon her recent monograph *Raving* (2023b), she situated her work between autofiction and autotheory to reveal writing, theorizing, and raving as mutually constitutive practices.

Guiding us through her lived experiences as a raver, Wark provided thick sensorial descriptions of a typical Brooklyn rave, detailing the relational dynamics between ravers, the collective labor of DJs and venue staff, the spatial mapping of the dance floor, and the heightened psychic sensation of drug use. She emphasized the distinct stakes of participating in nightlife for queer and trans subjects, pointing to the vital presence of *dolls*—an affirmative vernacular for the trans women whose affective, sexual, and material labor actively sustain these underground spaces.

Wark's reflexivity in her positionality as a trans woman, scholar, and long-time raver allowed for a conceptualization of raving through a distinctly transsexual experience of time and space, a framework made especially salient in the topic of dissociation. She defined "ravespace" as a situational continuum occurring at the nexus of music, dance, and ketamine, demarcating a site of vacillation between psychic dissociation and euphoric enfleshment. This state of dissociation in a rave, wherein mind and body are free of one another, offered new understandings of the contentious discourse concerning (dis)embodiment within trans studies. Through her autotheoretical mapping of the trans body drifting across "sideways time," Wark illustrated a non-linear, non-vertical traversal of space, articulating a trans temporality that extends beyond and collapses into the boundless horizon of the dance floor. By centering trans subjectivities in this sono-somatic phenomenon, Wark shed new light upon the technological capacities of sound and music in reconfiguring time, space, and the body.

6. Roundtable: Trans-As-Identity Vs Trans-As-Method

The roundtable convened ethnomusicologist and popular music scholar Kaleb Goldschmitt, activist and univer-

[7] Please note that the title of the keynote address was changed from the one listed in the official program.

[8] For further discussion of Wark's tactical uses of autofiction and autotheory in her written works, see Wark (2023a).

sity dean Julián X. Latshang, critical musicologist Stephan Pennington, and keynote respondent Wark to discuss the conference's central stakes in the tenuous friction between trans-as-identity and trans-as-method. These senior scholars addressed these theoretical tensions not only through disciplinary expertise, but perhaps more significantly, through their lived experiences shaped by a multitude of roles they simultaneously occupy within and beyond the academy.

Goldschmitt began their remarks by inhabiting the current difficult political moment, speaking candidly about the challenges of teaching at a historically all-women's college. Contemplating the pressing question of "what to do" at this juncture, they turned to the activist music label Red Hot Organization's recent compilation album *TRAИSA* (2024) for a possible answer. The album, which pays homage to Brazilian gender-bending musician Caetano Veloso, features contributions of trans/non-binary, queer, and allied musicians from various genres and generations, gesturing toward the possibility for a trans musical coalition across nations, political allegiances, and media.

Building on the theme of coalition, Latshang reflected on their time as Interim President of the local activist organization Trans Resistance MA. Recounting their experiences securing funding, curating, and coordinating a music festival for the organization's annual march, they attested to the power of music to cultivate trans joy, which is crucial for sustaining community and mobilizing action. Speaking also from their role as dean of student affairs, Latshang revealed the dual burden faced by professionals of marginalized identities in navigating everyday encounters with racial and transphobic hostilities on campus while also bearing the emotional labor of supporting students through those same violent structures.

In his contribution to the roundtable, Pennington revisited the "inconvenient" but canonical voices of trans history, such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, to deliver a critique of the historiographical urge to tidy up, truncate, and distort the biographies of black trans revue girls, hookers, and drag queens to mold them into palatable trans heroes. The repudiation of the bygone figure of the transsexual—made "embarrassing" in the uncritical embrace of Sandy Stone's "posttranssexual" (2006)—stood out as particularly salient and offered prescient insight into contemporary online gender politics. For Pennington, the multiplication of gender identification categories on platforms such as Tumblr marks a shift toward a discourse where "trans" itself becomes a transmedial story to be splintered, distributed, and consumed.

Following these presentations, Wark pulled together common themes pertaining to generational shifts in the politics of representation and the stakes of increased queer and trans visibility. In a tender moment, Wark reflected on her own vantage point as someone who transitioned relatively late in life and reminded us of the painful reality that many who transition early do not make it to her age. The panelists then shared personal experiences of navigating a world ridden with cisheteronormative standards, broaching topics such as issues of safety, the complexities of "passing," the shifting landscape of trans studies, and the ongoing precarities of writing on and through trans∗. For an audience composed mostly of graduate students, young professionals, and early-career artists, this intergenerational exchange provided invaluable guidance and encouragement in an admittedly destitute moment.

Conclusion

At the heart of our conference was a deep concern for the works, practices, experiences, and lives of transgender and transsexual individuals and communities. Since the dissemination of our call for papers in November 2024, trans people in the United States and globally have faced increasingly mounting attacks on their healthcare access, legal recognition, and existence. Under these oppressive conditions, our call to critically consider TRANS∗Media—namely, to indulge in the debates of trans-as-identity and trans-as-method *vis-à-vis* trans experience—may have seemed blissfully ivory-towered. However, we believe that it was precisely because of this precarious moment in time that we not only exchange scholarly insights and engage in critical dialogue, but more importantly, gather as friends and colleagues to collectively practice an ethics of care.

The conference's most profound achievement lies beyond our printed program. It crystallized, instead, in the fleeting moments, the unscripted exchanges, and the serendipitous encounters that transgressed the confines of an official schedule. It materialized in the sheer gravity of our collective presence, an assembly of queer and trans scholars flooding seminar rooms, spilling out into the hallways, and taking up space in the department shared lounge. It resonated in the affective surplus of the in-between, in the contagious laughter over shared meals and the animated debates carried over into coffee breaks. It thrived into the late hours of the night, culminating in a karaoke session fueled by cheap cocktails and belting "Danza Kuduro" until our voices gave out. TRANS∗Media marked a convergence of a radical kinship years in the making, emerging in the peripheries of larger conferences, through informal mentorships, across quiet solidarities. Even as queer/trans utopia continues to be out of reach, the conference offered a rare glimpse of its warm glow on the horizon, underscoring the need for such ad hoc moments of communal healing.

References

Amin, Kadji. 2023. "Whither Trans Studies?: A Field at a Crossroads." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 10 (1): 54–58. https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-10273224.

Baitz, Dana. 2018. "Towards a Trans* Method in Musicology." In *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness*, edited by Fred Everett Maus and Sheila Whiteley, 366–381. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199793525.001.0001.

Campt, Tina M. 2017. *Listening to Images*. Duke University Press.

Chu, Andrea Long, and Emmett Harsin Drager. 2019. "After Trans Studies." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6 (1): 103–116. https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-7253524.

Gill-Peterson, Jules. 2014. "The Technical Capacities of the Body: Assembling Race, Technology, and Transgender." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1 (3): 402–418. https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2685660.

Halberstam, Jack. 2018. *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. University of California Press.

———. 2022. "Trans Representation After the Figure." *Frieze*, April 29. https://www.frieze.com/article/trans-representation-after-figure.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press.

Naficy, Hamid. 2001. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton University Press.

Nguyễn Tân Hoàng. 2014. *A View from the Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation*. Duke University Press.

OED (Oxford English Dictionary). n.d. "trans-, prefix." Accessed 26 May 2026. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/trans_prefix.

Sontag, Susan. 1977. *On Photography*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Stone, Sandy. 2006. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." In *The Transgender Studies Reader*, edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, 221–235. Routledge.

Stryker, Susan. 2008. *Transgender History*. Seal Press.

Sucena, Kelsey "Chloë." 2025. "My Camera Is a Pussy." *Fifth Wheel Press*, October 21. https://fifthwheelpress.com/blog/camera-pussy-sucena?rq=my%20camera%20is%20a%20pussy.

Sullivan, Nikki, and Samantha Murray, eds. 2016. *Somatechnics: Queering the Technologisation of Bodies*. Ashgate.

Tompkins, Avery. 2014. "Asterisk." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1 (1–2): 26–27. https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399497.

Voegelin, Salomé. 2010. *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. Continuum.

Wark, McKenzie. 2023a. "Critical (Auto) Theory." *E-flux Journal* 140: 73–81. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/140/572300/critical-auto-theory.

———. 2023b. *Raving*. Duke University Press.

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 110–114

Review of *Atomic Tunes: The Cold War in American and British Popular Music* by Joanna and Tim Smolko, Indiana University Press, 2021

by Aldwyn Hogg Jr.

The Cold War between the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) persists as the overwhelmingly defining conflict of the preceding century. This battle of ideas, as it has so often been reductively framed in contemporary popular histories, spectacularly reconfigured and reordered life around the world and influenced realms of human activity including geopolitics (like the multitude of anti-colonial and independence movements and struggles in Asia, Africa, and South America), technology (like the space race), and music and media (like the ascendancy of radio and, later during the century, the television).

Indeed, as Tim and Joanna Smolko's 2021 *Atomic Tunes: The Cold War in American and British Popular Music* demonstrates, the Cold War and its constituent anxieties and frictions acted as a potent prism that significantly shaped currents in popular music. The book explores and typifies ways in which this global conflict influenced popular music and musicians in America and Britain by interweaving a loosely chronological accounting of the major theaters and crises of the Cold War (like the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the Iran-Contra Affair, and the fall of the Berlin Wall) with close analyses of musicians' political influences and affiliations, and the expressions thereof in their music. This kind of study, Smolko and Smolko contend, has the potential to "give deep and substantial insight into the social history of the conflict, capturing the thoughts and emotions of everyday people who lived under the shadow of Stalin, *Sputnik*, mushroom clouds, and missiles" (2). Despite the book's title and cover page prominently framing the atomic bomb as the preeminent symbol of the Cold War, its ten chapters touch on and draw connections between many different moments, places, and objects of the conflict and aspects of American and British culture, politics, and music. The rich tapestry woven throughout *Atomic Tunes* between political history, music, and other media objects and cultural practices—like books, films, dancing, and television—makes the book an accessible and efficient introductory text on popular music and Cold War politics during the twentieth century. However, it is precisely because of this broad scope that those seeking a sustained study of the era's cultural politics or of particular music genres would likely find the text insufficient.

The book's introduction situates the text within broader musicological scholarship on the Cold War, framing it as a recuperative response to Peter J. Schmelz's assessment in 2009 that "the recently initiated, increasingly active musicological engagement with the Cold War [is] long overdue" (Schmelz 2009, 3). The introduction also delimits the scope of the musical analyses contained within the chapters as focusing primarily on song lyrics (which, throughout the book, disappointingly crowds out analysis of these songs' sonic or musical profiles), and outlines the criteria that informed Smolko and Smolko's collection and categorization of what they call "Cold War songs." These songs emerged alongside historical developments in protest music and the rise of the singer-songwriter in the mid-1960s. And Cold War songs endure today as rich and viable artifacts that reflect and refract the nuances of the cultural contexts out of which they emerged. Indeed, as

Smolko and Smolko explain, Cold War songs "give insight into the historical events of the Cold War," "reflect public opinion on Cold War issues," and "are stimulating and creative in their own right" (10). In spite of the glaring omission of Black American popular music genres (there is no discussion of soul music, funk, or rhythm and blues, for example), the book's ten chapters deftly contextualize within a fuzzy chronology of the Cold War songs from genres including (American) folk music, country music, novelty or comedy songs, early electric-rock, hard rock and heavy metal, punk rock, and finally, electronic and new wave music.

Chapter one, "Folk: From Paul Robeson to Bob Dylan," explores the confrontations and frictions between Cold War politics and Cold War songs by seminal figures of the American Folk music movement. The musicians Smolko and Smolko discuss in this chapter—whose Cold War songs, they argue, were situated at the nexus of communism, capitalism, patriotism, and fear (2)—include Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger in the folk-music group, the Almanac Singers, and their 1948 "Dance Around My Atom Fire"; Vern Paltrow's 1945 "Old Man Atom"; and, more extensively, Bob Dylan and his 1962 "Let Me Die in My Footsteps," 1963 "Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues," and 1964 "With God on Our Side." This chapter also includes the eminent Black American political-artist, Paul Robeson, whose categorization by Smolko and Smolko as a folk singer in the same vein as Guthrie, Paltrow, and Dylan is surprising.[1] Robeson's performance repertoire was largely populated by Negro spirituals and other Black American songforms (like "Go Down, Moses"), western classical art-songs (including operatic arias like Mozart's "O Isis und Osiris" from *Die Zauberflöte*), popular show tunes (like his signature anthem, "Ol' Man River" from the musical, *Oklahoma!*), and, indeed, pro-union and labor songs with a decidedly leftist tint (like "Joe Hill"). Although Robeson's leftist, anti-colonial, and stridently anti-racist politics did share resonance with figures like Seeger and Guthrie—and in fact, Robeson was even institutionally and professionally affiliated with People's Songs, a music group founded by Seeger in the 1945 (which likely influenced Smolko and Smolko's decision to include Robeson in this chapter)—his incorporation here under the genre of folk as the very first musician discussed seems a misstep, particularly because of the lack of attention given to his political deployment of Negro spirituals, perhaps the closest comparable thing to a Black "folk" music.[2]

The second chapter, "Folk: Women's Voice," explores the Cold War songs of significant women in the American Folk music movement: Peggy Seeger ("Four Minute Warning," 1980, about nuclear missile salvos); Malvina Reynolds ("What Have They Done to the Rain," 1965, about nuclear fallout); Joan Baez ("Where Are You Now, My Son?," 1973, responding to the Vietnam War); and Janet Greene ("Commie Lies," 1964, an anti-communist tirade). Although this chapter follows the same structural formula and re-presents much of the same kind of content as the one prior—briefly glossing the political influences and entanglements of the musicians in question, contextualizing their songs within their genre and against historical events of the Cold War, and presenting rudimentary lyrical analyses that pin-point connections between specific lines in the songs with these historical events—it nonetheless raises several compelling questions concerning formations of gender and the particular stakes of anti-nuclear agitation by American women during the Cold War. Reynolds's "What Have They Done to the Rain," for example, emerged from her work in the Women Strike for Peace—an anti-war organization that, in the sixties, had drawn the ire and suspicion of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

Chapter three, "Country: The Conservative Stance," explores Cold War country songs of musicians and songwriters including Lee V. McCollum and his 1950 "Jesus Hits Like an Atom Bomb" (likening the power of Christian belief to the explosive power of an atomic bomb), Riley Walker and His Rockin-R-Rangers and their 1954 "Uranium Miner's Boogie" (a song that follows the day of a fictional amateur uranium-ore prospector), and Scott Wiseman's 1952 "I'm No Communist" (a stalwart paean against communism). Although the authors reduce the politics of this entire genre as being entirely ensconced in American conservatism—"the right"—by way of it emerging out of Southern Evangelist theologies, this chapter nonetheless demonstrates one of the book's major strengths in the multitudinous connections the authors make between music, Cold War politics, and other aspects of material culture and economics; for example, in their discussion of the physical records of "Uranium Miner's Boogie," which were colored blue with a yellow label "to match the color of uranium … and to make it appear radioactive" (87) is linked to amateur uranium-prospecting.

"Novelty and Comedy Songs: The Cold War as a Big Joke," the fourth chapter of the book, focuses on a peculiar form of musical production known as novelty songs,

[1] Although Smolko and Smolko do seem to suggest that the inclusion of Robeson in this chapter, in this way—as "simply call[ing] him a folk musician would hardly do him justice" (21)—is reductive, they offer no further rationale for his inclusion here in a chapter otherwise devoted to folk musicians.

[2] Indeed, as Shana Redmond articulates, Robeson himself often argued for the inclusion of "our music—Negro music of African American derivation … in the tradition of the world's great folk music" (Redmond 2014, 108).

"popular music meant to be humorous" (105). Like the second chapter, behind the rote engagement with the lyrics of Cold War novelty songs like Dickie Goodman's 1961 "Berlin Top Ten" satirizing radio censorship in East Germany (the German Democratic Republic), and Doris Day's 1949 "Tic, Tic, Tic" mimicking the sounds of a Geiger counter, lies a thoughtful consideration of the experience of American children living under the constant threat of nuclear annihilation. "Bert the Turtle (The Duck and Cover Song)" from the 1951 civil-defense educational film, *Duck and Cover*, Smolko and Smolko explain, was a very popular and widely circulated instructional film for schoolchildren on taking shelter under their desks in the event of a bomb siren that constituted just one part of children's varied experiences and understandings of Cold War culture which included toys that were "rife with Atomic age themes"; board games like *Uranium Rush;* and comic-books and other pulp media infused with atomic themes like *Atomic Man*, *Captain Atom*, and *Nukla*.

The fifth chapter of the book, "Early Rock and Other Styles: Rocking the Bomb," explores the Cold War songs of an eclectic assortment of genres including rock and roll (Dude Martin and His Roundup Gang's 1948, "Atom Bomb Baby"), doo-wop (Sammy Salvo's 1961 "A Mushroom Cloud"), calypso (Sir Lancelot's 1947 "Atomic Energy")—erroneously described in this chapter as a Latin American rather than Anglo-Caribbean genre of music—and the blues (Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins' 1940s "War News Blues"). Rock and roll's (in)famous sensuality, eroticism, and crude (re)formations of gender gained heightened tropes during the nuclear age, Smolko and Smolko perceptively observe, with women in song-lyrics being described as "bombshells" and requiring careful care because, "'like uranium … an unstable element[, they were] liable to explode at any moment'" (134).

Chapters six and seven, "Mainstream Rock: Bowie, U2, Sting, Billy Joel, and Springsteen" and "Hard Rock and Heavy Metal: The Electric Guitar as the Bomb," respectively, implicitly make up the book's second half, shifting focus from popular music in America to Britain. Most of the songs in this part also tend to focus on issues and events from the last three decades of the Cold War such as the dire spectacle of the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, everyday Soviet life during *détente* and *glasnost'*, the covert subterfuge and projects of the American war-machine in Central and South America, and life behind the Berlin Wall. Chapter six explores the Cold War songs of the rock-superstars and bands including David Bowie ("Heroes," 1977, which Smolko and Smolko suggest has since become anthemic of the fall of the Berlin Wall); U2 (their 1987 album, *The Joshua Tree*, that critiqued various elements of American Cold War foreign policy); Sting ("Russians," 1985, that lyrically joined the fates of America and the Soviet Union); Billy Joel ("Leningrad," 1989, inspired by his 1987 tour of the USSR); and Bruce Springsteen (the entirety of his 1981 performance in East Berlin). The authors' discussion of Joel's cultural ambassadorship during his 1987 summer tour of the Soviet Union gestures towards some of the transnational cultural politics and their ramifications that shaped discourse and performance of popular music during the Cold War that they focus on at greater length in the book's final chapter. Both the first rock tour of this scale and the first ever rock concert to be broadcast on state-radio in the Soviet Union, Joel's performance circuit of the Soviet Union, which adopted the theme "A Matter of Trust," brought him into contact with everyday Soviet citizens and musicians when he "appeared live on the Russian TV variety show, *The Ring*"; when he "sang medieval chants with a Georgian men's choir" in Tbilisi; and when he commiserated with young Soviet rock musicians and fans about being castigated "as a teenager for having long hair" (168).

In the book's seventh chapter, "Hard Rock and Heavy Metal: The Electric Guitar as the Bomb," the authors perform a different kind of musical analysis in their exploration of the Cold War songs of hard rock and heavy metal musicians including: Jimi Hendrix ("All Along the Watchtower" and "The Star-Spangled Banner," 1968 and 1969, respectively); Black Sabbath ("Electric Funeral" and "War Pigs," 1970); Rush ("Distant Early Warning," "Red Lenses," and "Between the Wheels," all from their 1984 album, *Grace Under Pressure*); Iron Maiden ("2 Minutes to Midnight," 1984); and Metallica ("Fight Fire with Fire," 1984). Whereas in the other chapters, the authors center song lyrics in their musical analyses, in this chapter, they instead confront the non-textual musical profile of the songs. They argue, "the actual sounds generated by the musicians allow listeners to 'feel' the tumult of warfare and contemplate the consequences of a nuclear apocalypse in a way that earlier styles of music could not" (182). This seems plausible, with the authors going on to suggest that the expanded sonic palette available to electric guitarists in the 1970s and 1980s (with things like high-output amplifiers, an aesthetic embrace of noise *à la* distortion, and devices like whammy bars and effect pedals) allowed musicians like Hendrix to imbue his performances with a newfound immediacy and harshness, whose unsettling mimetic e/affect represented and evoked in microcosm the horror, pain, and anger of the unnamed casualties of this so-called "cold" war. Unfortunately, Smolko and Smolko's analysis of Hendrix's 1969 performance at Woodstock of "The Star-Spangled Banner," like that of their subsequent analysis of Black Sabbath's "Electric Funeral," is weakened by their lack of visual musical notation. For example, Smolko and Smolko argue Black Sabbath alludes to Gustav Holst's "Mars" from *The Planets* in their song through their use of the wah pedal; and that the

use of this pedal supposedly "performs the same function as the extended bowing technique and microtonal clusters in Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*" (190). While indeed a plausible connection, these observations would be even more compelling if accompanied by musical notation to make these clearer to us as readers. A substantiated comparison between Penderecki's musical language (and the aesthetic priorities thereof) and that of Black Sabbath would have also illuminated a unique moment of contact between Cold War popular music and avant-garde classical music aesthetics responding to the bomb. Likewise, Hendrix's creative deformations, signifyin', and (re)articulations of "The Star-Spangled Banner," the "extended barrage[s] of noise" that "depict the cataclysm of war" when Hendrix "hammers on the tritone of B-flat and E," would be much easier to visualize, audiate, and appreciate the significance of with the aid of some kind of notation (186).

One of the book's strongest chapters, chapter eight, "Punk Rock: Three Chords and the Apocalypse," explores the Cold War songs of punk groups such as: The Ramones ("My Brain is Hanging Upside Down [Bonzo Goes to Bitburg]," 1985, satirizing Ronald Reagan's visit to West Germany the same year); Crass ("Nagasaki Nightmare," 1980, a capricious threnody for the victims of the American nuclear-bombing of Japan); Discharge (their 1982 debut studio album *Hear Nothing See Nothing Say Nothing* concerning nuclear warfare); and Scars ("Your Attention Please," 1978/9, a rock-recitative in the manner of a public emergency announcement warning of an imminent nuclear strike). Like the previous chapter, the authors here attempt a different kind of analysis of "Nagasaki Nightmare." After briefly glossing the lyrical content of the song, they analyze in-depth the LP-single's physical packaging. The record was "packaged in a foldout, double-sided poster" that was "packed with text, photographs, illustrations, slogans and collages" that, in content, resembled "a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) pamphlet" (222). This poster—this paratext—ferociously condemned nuclear weapons and proliferation, raging that "'H-bombs [hydrogen bombs] are mind-control. They kill people a little bit everyday,'" and that "'Every time you turn on a light there's a Bomb behind the switch'" (223). As Smolko and Smolko note, the poster also included visual images of the immediate aftermath of the bombing of Nagasaki (taken by Japanese photographer Yosuke Yamahata), aerial images and maps locating nuclear facilities in Britain, detailed photos of nuclear missiles, and satirical portrait collages of Queen Elizabeth II, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Leonid Brezhnev. This consideration of the physicality and material existence and transmission of Cold War songs is but one of the strengths of this chapter (although one wishes the authors would have been able to reproduce this fascinating document within the text). Given Smolko and Smolko's fixation on song lyrics as their primary objects of analysis throughout the book, their brief meditation on the intentional reappropriation of the language of realpolitik by punk musicians that precedes their materialist analysis of "Nagasaki Nightmare" is much appreciated and deeply resonant. As they poignantly opine, war euphemisms—like "collateral damage," "clean bombs," "surgical strikes," and weapon names like "Tomahawk"—dehumanize humans at the same time as they humanize weapons and destruction (217).

Chapter nine, "Electronic and New Wave: The Cold War in a Synthesizer"—one of most provocative chapters of the book—primarily focuses on the Cold War songs of the seminal German electronic-music group, Kraftwerk, and the deep influence Cold War technologies had on their music. They also discuss the Cold War songs of new-wave musicians including Hazel O'Connor and her 1980 "Eighth Day," which reimagines the biblical cosmogony of Genesis as an eight-day, progressive apotheosis of weapons of mass destruction; Made for TV and their 1983 "So Afraid of the Russians," which critiques the immense economic resources required to sustain the American war-machine and its constituent technological apparatuses; and Depeche Mode and their 1984 "People Are People," which questions the futility of transnational community and peace amongst the Cold War belligerents impressed upon by various ideological state actors and apparatuses. The chapter, however, opens with some of the most compelling writing in the book with its tracing of the clandestine developmental links between the American military industrial complex and the very material technologies that allowed and, indeed, spurred the generation and proliferation of popular music genres after the second World War. Post-War research in electrical engineering led to the development of cheap transistors in the 1960s, an extremely important component in electrical circuitry used to modulate current that found great (and harrowing) military use in intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), amongst other hawkish technological applications. Access to cheap and reliable transistors (Robert Moog is quoted as being thrilled to be able to "buy a silicon junction for 25 cents"), Smolko and Smolko convincingly argue, brought about the genesis of perhaps the most variously genre-defining electronic instrument of the twentieth century, the synthesizer, and also led to the invention of the portable transistor radio in 1954 (244). Several other influential and iconic twentieth-century musical instruments also emerged from Pre-War state military research-and-development networks and spheres of influence in the United States and the Soviet Union. Leon Theremin, who invented the theremin in 1920, worked in

his later years as an engineer of covert surveillance systems for the Soviet secret police, the *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti* (the KGB). Similarly, Laurens Hammond, who invented the Hammond organ and Novachord (an early kind of analog synthesizer that used vacuum tubes) in 1935 and 1939, respectively, worked in American military research centers developing and refining missile guidance systems. Kraftwerk, then, in their championing of the synthesizer in their music, can thus be understood as direct beneficiaries of the products of this complex network of military industrial technological influence and development spurred by the Cold War. Kraftwerk produced several albums that flirted with the consequences of technological developments engendered by Cold War science. Their 1975 album, *Radio-Activity*, Smolko and Smolko note, not only thematically and sonically engaged with radio-broadcasting technologies—like antennae, transistors, and electromagnetic frequency-bands—but also technologies related to the natural, yet unnaturally apprehended phenomenon of radioactivity. "Geiger Counter" overlaid a synthesizer-replication of the operational sound of the device over a sample thereof. The pointillistic background in "Radioactivity" mimics the stochastic ejection of subatomic particles that defines radioactive decay. And "Uranium," whose eerie and ethereal timbral profile—a result of Kraftwerk's crafty use of the Votrax speech synthesizer—Smolko and Smolko propose, gives the song "an aural representation of the 'strange glow' often associated with radioactivity" (249).

The tenth and final chapter, "Wind of Change: The Fall of the Wall and the End of the Cold War," focuses not on Cold War songs that supposedly ended the war, but instead presents several fascinating curios of transcultural musical contact between America (and "the West" more broadly) and the Eastern Bloc in the years immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This chapter is noteworthy for its brief but informative table of notable popular musicians and groups who performed in the Eastern Bloc (274–275). It is a useful supplement to scholarship on Cold War cultural diplomacy programs like that of writers like Danielle Fosler-Lussier and Penny M. Von Eschen, as US-state sponsorship and support of popular music (and particularly rock music, Smolko and Smolko note) was ambiguous and ambivalent because of the perceived lack of sophistication and universal cultural appeal.[3] The moments the book's authors discuss in this chapter cast into relief and highlight some of the nuances of transcultural contact during the Cold War. Roger Waters, the co-founder of Pink Floyd, along with other guest musicians in 1990, for example, performed songs from the band's 1979 album, *The Wall*, at the Berlin Wall's death strip, a highly militarized, surveilled, and dangerous border point in the edifice. The physical wall itself figured into the concert as a kind of meta-stage prop, and the show was broadcast on television worldwide.

The greatest strengths of *Atomic Tunes: The Cold War in American and British Popular Music* by Tim and Joanna Smolko are its easy readability and the diverse array of materials the authors use to weave their text—from films, books, ephemera (like posters and pamphlets), to fanzines. The book, however—notwithstanding those critiques outlined elsewhere in this review—is made substantially weaker by its preciously scant analysis of the public reception of the Cold War songs the authors analyze. Their thesis that these songs "reflect public opinion on Cold War issues" is difficult to evaluate and contextualize given the authors present very little evidence of the public response to these songs, nor much insight into their circulation. The book's failure to include Black popular music genres—like rhythm and blues, soul, funk, and pop—is also surprising and a considerable deficiency, given the immense cultural capital Black music genres possessed in America and market-value in the American music industry. Regardless, *Atomic Tunes* no doubt succeeds in its primary goal to stimulate interest in popular music during the Cold War.

[3] See Fosler-Lussier 2013 and Von Eschen 2004.

References

Fosler-Lussier, Danielle. 2013. *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Redmond, Shana. 2014. *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora*. New York: New York University Press.

Schmelz, Peter J. 2009. "Introduction: Music in the Cold War." *Journal of Musicology* 21 (1): 3–16.

Von Eschen, Penny M. 2004. *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Intégral 39 (2026)
pp. 115–131

Historical Materialism: Normative and Applied. Reviewed works: Stephan Hammel, *Toward a Materialist Conception of Music History*, Haymarket Books, 2024, and Brian Kane, *Hearing Double: Jazz, Ontology, Auditory Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2024*

by Bryan J. Parkhurst

Introduction

Before I say anything evaluative about Stephan Hammel's *Toward a Materialist Conception of Music History* (henceforth *MCMH*) and Brian Kane's *Hearing Double: Jazz, Ontology, Auditory Culture* (henceforth *HD*), let me say something descriptive about the discipline of philosophy. It is standard in Anglophone analytic philosophy to draw a distinction between *normative ethics* and *applied ethics*. "Roughly, normative ethics involves the attempt to state and defend the basic principles of morality.... Similarly, it might be said to treat the basic moral rights, duties, virtues, and so on" (Kagan 1992, 223). Also roughly, applied ethics "seeks to apply the general moral truths uncovered in normative ethics to particular actions, practices, or institutions" (Archard and Lippert Rasmussen 2013, 320). Even more roughly: normative ethics figures out what the ethical norms are, and applied ethics figures out how those norms apply in some ethical predicament. In what follows, I want to draw a distinction that is somewhat, but only somewhat, analogous. This is the distinction between what I hereby dub *normative historical materialism* and *applied historical materialism*.[1] The job of the former is, roughly, to set forth the rules of the road, the investigatory and expository principles, that constitute and regulate a mode of sociohistorical inquiry and explanation, one associated above all with

* I owe a debt of gratitude to members of the Ann Arbor Music Theory Reading Group and Colloquy (AAMTRGC, pronounced "Amtrak") for stimulating discussions of *Hearing Double* during the summer of 2025. Extra-special thanks go to AAMTRGC participants Tom Ingram and James Jarrett for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this essay. My Oberlin colleague Jamie O'Leary gave me excellent advice about how to improve my arguments. Thanks also to Evan Martschenko, *Intégral* reviews editor, for countless rounds of comments.

[1] One way of getting at the big disanalogy is to say that normative and applied ethics share a single domain (moral questions, whether general or specific) whereas normative and applied historical materialism pertain to two different areas (historiography and history, respectively).

the writings of Karl Marx;[2] whereas the job of the latter is, also roughly, to follow those norms in making inquiries into and constructing explanations of particular historical events, episodes, states of affairs, situations, tendencies, or whatever. Even more roughly: normative historical materialism says how to do history, and applied historical materialism does history that way. Of course, in actual historiographic practice, including Marx's, this idealized division of normative and applied intellectual labor is rarely even aimed at, let alone rigorously maintained. Actually, in Marx, the *methodological* (Marx's prescriptions about how to give historical explanations) is nigh on impossible to distinguish from the *methodical* (Marx's explanations), so seamlessly are they interwoven, or, less politely, so messily are they muddled. And Marx's work is not unique in this respect. Still, when reading *Das Kapital*, or the texts of Marx's followers—or, really, any historical writing that has any genuinely explanatory, supra-descriptive ambitions whatsoever—it can be a useful exercise in exegetical bookkeeping to try to keep track of what should get entered on the normative side of the ledger and what on the applied side.

Now I will say something evaluative about *MCMH* and *HD*, something that keeps exegetical accounts in the way just mentioned. Hammel has written a fascinating, fun, and feisty book whose overall genre I deem to be that of normative historical materialism.[3] And Kane has put together a masterly synthesis of social theory, conceptual anthropology (by which I mean: the cultural anthropology of concept-use), and music analysis whose overall genre I deem to be that of applied historical materialism. Having made that evaluative-taxonomic claim, I must now partly retract it—the taxonomic part, not the evaluative part. For, as their readers will see, both writers cover both normative and applied ground. Hammel and Kane both offer considerations that favor engaging in, and both discuss the normative principles that undergird, musical and music-historical explanation-giving of a distinctively historical-materialist stripe—whether officially and self-consciously, as in *MCMH*, or without flagging it as such, as in *HD*. And both then pursue that sort of explanation-giving. So, being a touch more careful, what I really should say is that the most noteworthy parts of Hammel's book are the parts where he describes and endorses the kind of thing that Kane does, and that the most noteworthy parts of Kane's book are the parts where he does the kind of thing Hammel describes and endorses. This is pure coincidence, as far as I know. *MCMH* has nothing to do with jazz, and *HD* is not in dialogue with the Marxian literary canon. Nor does either book cite the other. (I don't know that the publication timeline would have allowed for this.) Yet they form a serendipitous unity. And, interestingly, as I shall lay out, they pair up in such a fashion that they end up being not just complementary—as the normative and applied sides of one historical-materialist coin—but also mutually critiquing. In brief, Hammel's normative arguments help us see that some of Kane's protracted wrangling with analytic philosophers who write about the ontology of art is misplaced or beside the point, and Kane's applied analyses obviate some of Hammel's criticisms of, and purported identifications of gross lacunae within, the post-Adlerian trajectory of music scholarship, and might also make us think twice about just how capital-p *Political* historical materialism really is. An upshot of this critical complementarity, by the way, is that it would work well to teach these books back to back—first *MCMH* and then *HD*, as a normative backswing and an applied follow-through—in a graduate seminar.

1. Toward a Materialist Conception of Music History[4]

In case you were scratching your head just now about the "Adlerian" part of "post-Adlerian," it refers to the Austrian musicologist Guido Adler (1855–1941), who is one of the main protagonists in *MCMH*, along with Eduard Hanslick and Karl Marx. Adler is introduced to us as the patriarch and avatar of what Hammel calls "classical musicology," which is introduced to us as a formerly hegemonic, but later on unjustly and irrationally jettisoned, musicological explanatory program. More on its key features in a moment. Were it resuscitated and properly cultivated—where

[2] Marx's most famous programmatic statements about the nature of historical materialism (a term coined and popularized by Engels, not Marx) can be found in *The German Ideology* (1845–46), *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), and, most especially and most quotably, the preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). "Social relations," Marx writes in that preface, "are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist" (Marx [1847] 1999a).

[3] In the interest of full disclosure, I should mention that Hammel and I have coauthored several papers about Marx and historical materialism, and that I am thanked in the introduction to *MCMH*. But we were not actively collaborating during the period when he wrote the book, and none of its ideas were hatched in direct consultation with me. I should also mention that Hammel participated in AAMTRGC (see footnote 1) and thus was party to the genesis of some of my ideas about Kane's ideas.

[4] For the sake of flow, and because they frequently bring up Marxian minutiae that are a bit too inside baseball for an essay in a music journal, my "little-picture" critical reactions to Hammel's case for historical materialism will mostly be consigned to footnotes. However, the "big-picture" Kaneian critique of Hammel, which will speak more directly to the interests and concerns of music theorists and musicologists, dwells in the main body of the text and serves as part of the essay's conclusion.

that cultivation has both a scientific and a political side to it, as we will see—classical musicology could mature into a full-blooded "materialist conception of music history" (passim), a.k.a. "historical materialism as a musicological method" (45). Chapter 1 of *MCMH* positions historical materialism as an alternative and antidote to the "realist conception of art" (9ff.). Realism of this strain is the doctrinaire bromide that art either ought to, or always already does, mirror non- or extra-artistic reality. Customarily, one appends to this dogma the sub-dogma that art does or ought to reflect its worldly surroundings so as to afford art's onlookers a sharpened apprehension of grim and grimy socioeconomic matters of fact. Hammel sees this red-pill[5] realism (as I think of it) as a Marxian brainworm—a cliché so tempting as to have become *de rigueur* among Marx's lesser imitators—that dulls the acumen of many Soviet aestheticians and Western Marxists. Instead of treating art as reflective of, and epiphenomenal to, some core part of reality, a duly materialist conception of music would treat art as, or as a core part of, that core part. Music is something that *is*, rather than something that inadvertently and obliquely *is about*, what is prominently and consequentially socially, economically, historically, etc. *real*. That is all to say, adopting the Marxian dialect, that "applying a materialist method to music history involves treating the art as part of the social base, rather than as an aspect of society's superstructure" (26). In other words, materialistically historicizing music means "setting music squarely in the productive economic realm," which in turn "demands that its specific mode of production be analyzed in every instance" (27). Note well that the exhortation to place primary expository and explanatory emphasis on how we make (in a broadly economic sense of "make") music is not meant to preempt or preclude analysis of how we think about music. Quite to the contrary, the two go hand in hand, since, supposedly, "the concepts that are relevant to music are a function of the specific relations of production on which its making is founded" (28).[6] Or, as the point might be slightly more modestly and therefore slightly more plausibly stated: oftentimes one can tell a credible story about how a way of thinking about music subserves, and is subtended by, a way of manufacturing music.

Chapter 2, "The Culture Phase of Industry," slays a number of sacred cows as it goes about skewering Adorno's amateurish, pseudo-Marxian, and self-underminingly pro-capitalist commitments in the realm of economic theory. Hammel presses us to give up on Adorno's highly musicologically influential theorization of the culture industry, not because it is part of a Eurocentric "grand narrative"—the usual bad reason given for dumping Adorno—but because it is the music-historical fruit of that poisonous economic-theoretic tree.[7] Chapter 3, "Disenchantment and Musicological Method," leads more cows to the slaughter. The biggest bovine in the bunch is the still-vaunted "criticism-ism" (my term) of Joseph Kerman and like-minded "anti-positivists." Hammel reaches the unflattering but unimpugnable verdict that Kerman is guilty of having abandoned himself to perverse, unmotivated suspiciousness—cynicism tinged with *ennui*—toward the very idea of musicology as a self-conceivedly truth-seeking, fact-finding, and explanation-giving endeavor. Closer to home for music theorists, Kerman notoriously

[5] I mean "red-pill" in its original, pre-social-media sense, which stems from *The Matrix* (1999), in which, by taking the red pill, Neo elects to face bravely a bitter truth (about oppression by exploitative overlords) rather than basking in a comforting illusion (read: ideology, false consciousness, etc.). It is curious, and a shame, that the term has become associated with the online alt-right, since the "red" of "red-pill" sounds like it should have Left-wing connotations—and seems to have been so intended in *The Matrix*.

[6] I am not sure how best to fill out the rather pat claim that the concepts *are a function of* the relations. But I am inclined to doubt that the class of musically relevant concepts—a vast category, given that there would seem to be few to no restrictions on what could conceivably count as *relevant*—is destined to be narrowly "productivist" in either origin or application. (And if "relevant" just means "relevant to production," then the question is begged.) A nearby worry that nagged me as I read chapter 1 had to do with the epistemic credentials of our inquiries into music's "specific mode of production." Hammel maintains that "a break with the critique of scientific rationality"—a critique he rightly regards as having been taken over from Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, uncritically and only half comprehendingly, by postmodern musicologists—"is a necessary prerequisite for making the adoption of historical materialism as a musicological method intelligible" (64). But, incongruously, he also says of the historical materialist method that "its analyses are not validated by correspondence to reality, or by their capacity to predict future events" (29). Rather, "materialism is realistic insofar as it participates in the transformation of social relations so as to bring them in line with the level of development of society's ever more impressive capacities" (29). The either/or this sets up strikes me as being overdrawn, and, more than that, overdrawn along unwittingly Adornian-Horkheimerian "anti-positivist" lines. Common sense suggests that an analysis of reality will need to be accurate and predictive (etc.) for it to be of much aid to us as we seek to bring about "transformations of social relations." Other things being equal, that is to say, true beliefs and solid empirical explanations (and the like) are a great boon to, and probably a *sine qua non* for, the efficient and efficacious realization of practical ends of whatever sort, including political ends. I do not see this anti-realist *façon de parler* as a deep problem for Hammel's overall proposal, but I do think a slight tempering of anti-realist rhetoric could go a long way if Hammel wants us to take the "science" part of "science of style" (see below) at face value.

[7] Adorno's influence over musicologists has waned over the last couple of decades. Nevertheless, the New Musicology can be understood as, in the main, Adornoism minus Marxism. And, as I contend in Parkhurst 2024a and 2024b, music theory is currently going through its postponed New-Musicological phase. Thanks to Tom Ingram for pressing me on this point.

promulgated an unargued, *a priori* disavowal of the investigatory presupposition that there could be non-arbitrary, objectively better or worse (more or less enlightening, more or less rationally and evidentiarily forceful) answers to "why?" questions about musical structure. This disavowal, which later inscribed itself as a negative article of faith in the post-positivist (new-)musicological catechism, fueled Kerman's, and Kerman's disciples', antipathy toward efforts on the part of music analysts to tether their own disciplinary identity to the intellectual mission of answering such music-structural questions scrupulously and systematically. Kermanian anti-analytical, anti-positivist prejudices, which still circulate, stand as insuperable barriers to the establishment of a robust historical-materialist explanatory project *vis-à-vis* music. So we must take one step back—toward the classical musicology of Adler—in order to take two steps forward into the Marxian historical-materialist promised land.

I have not yet told you what classical musicology is. According to Hammel, "the central theoretical concept of classical musicology" (82) is *style*; and classical musicology's "orienting concern [is] with the conditions of musical rightness (formalism), as well as the patterns of stability and change in music's grammatical framework over time (style history)" (106).[8] We learn more about formalism (*qua* doctrine of musical rightness) in chapter 4, "Democratic Formalism," which is a highly unorthodox and aggressively revisionary, though compelling, intellectual portrait of Eduard Hanslick. Hammel's Hanslick is to music analysis what philosopher Robert Brandom (and Brandom's Hegel[9]) is to semantic analysis in linguistics: a thinker who assigns to *inference*—the rational activity whereby one acquires further beliefs on the basis of already-held beliefs—uncontested primacy in the order of explanation:

> Hanslick maintains that in committing to a theme, the musician makes a move in a space of musical reasons. The listener's intellect, including that of the listening musician, is involved in relating subsequent moves to previous ones. Following Brandom, we can say that musical moves stand to one another in relations of compatibility and incompatibility. The content of a musical move consists in the full set of its entailments and exclusions.… As the music's course demonstrates how musical moves can be rationally related to one another, an ear … is naturally relieved, and perhaps even delighted, to hear and tacitly endorse unanticipated examples of musical soundness. (77)

The keystone of Hammel's own Hanslickian historical-materialist inferentialism is this tenet: "[Musical] rightness is a matter of musical grammar, the rationality of which corresponds to the conditions of the modern subject" (78). There is much to unpack in this compressed formulation. The long and the short of it—and I shall first err on the side of the long—is that (1) capitalist modernity engenders in us moderns a structure of selfhood that (2) is defined by a mode of rationality that (3) is such as to demand of (a work of) music that (4) it be pervasively self-certifying, in the diachronic sense (signaled by such terms as "musical moves" and "the music's course") that (5) all later stages of it must discernibly and demonstrably follow from, and must be chosen by the composer because and insofar as they are entailments of, earlier stages of it, stages that (6) are formally and functionally assembled in such a way that (7) these entailment relations count as syntactic in nature.[10] If I were to instead err on the side of the short, I might say,

[8] Hammel does not define "rightness," but his use of the term calls to mind Robert Gjerdingen's discussion of (Leopold Mozart's discussion of) "good technical composition and the arrangement of material: il filo (*der gute Satz, und die Ordnung, il filo*)" (2007, 369). According to Gjerdingen, "*Satz* refers to the craft of musical composition, with all its rules and preferred procedures, while *Ordnung* refers to the choices made in the serial disposition of musical material. Placing things in a suitable order creates the cognitive thread (*il filo*) that, like Ariadne's thread which led Theseus through the labyrinth, guides the listener through a musical work" (ibid.). When I mentally substituted "suitable ordering" for "rightness" when reading *MCMH*, I found that its claims made the same amount and kind of sense.

[9] See Brandom's magisterial *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology* (2019).

[10] Interpretatively, i.e., as an encapsulation of Hanslick's view, I think Hammel's inferentialism has a lot to recommend it. Indeed, I have on more than one occasion advanced a similar interpretation of what I take to be the core thesis of Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (Parkhurst 2017, 2022a). However, philosophically, i.e., as a substantive position, I find musical inferentialism, at least in its Hanslickian and neo-Hanslickian Hammelian guises, to be unconvincing. Some of the immediate difficulties the view faces are these: (1) Much (good) music lacks robust, or even intermittently evident, syntactic organization. (2) Apart from strict canons and the conclusions of Fuxian fourth-species exercises, anything resembling genuine musical *entailment*—exceptionless necessitation—is vanishingly rare. (3) Violations of syntactic norms in music that *is* detectably syntactically organized might well be aesthetically praiseworthy (thus *good*, but not *right*?). (4) Particular grammatical norms are, virtually by definition, arbitrary, and thus syntactic licensing relations are not *rational* relations in any very profound sense of "rational." One who says the sentence "That cats is ate those mouse" violates the rules of English grammar (which might well have been different) but commits no infraction against (e.g.) rational coherence. (5) Language users have good reasons to wish to be understood, and thus good reasons to adopt suitable means to that end, such as abiding by grammatical norms; but they don't generally have good reasons to prefer one set of grammatical norms above any other. They just speak the language they happen to speak, and thus abide by the norms they happen to abide by. The musical/aesthetic/stylistic case looks to be much the same: one can certainly give style-internal reasons for deeming a compositional move to be stylistically correct, but it is hard to see how one could give good reasons for deeming *a style itself* to be the (or a) correct one to adopt or endorse. I give a more sustained, less *ad hoc* argument against what I call "tonal rationalism" in Parkhurst 2023. The problems that these objections pose for Hammel are by and large

gnomically: from capitalism, musical organicism sprouts forth.

Chapter 5, "Style Criticism and Historical Materialism," acquaints us with the ins and outs of the Adlerian conception of style criticism and walks us through that conception's affiliation with Hanslickian inferentialism. The Adlerian style critic is tasked with "describing the rightness a musical form can acquire at a given moment in the history of its grammar" (97). And this norm-codifying agenda underwrites a "musicological project" that "presents itself as alternative and successor to an aesthetics of music" (98). The cardinal virtue of Adlerian style criticism

> can be said to lie in offering the modern musician a basis for evaluating musical moves that is based neither on individual taste, nor on the demands of mere convention. Style mediates between the individual and the social by determining the scope of subjective agency, as well as serving as its ground. A science of style is meant to offer the musician a means of inheriting and endorsing music's constitutive concepts that overcomes the modern forms of scepticism.[11] (98)

If a "science of style" is to equip the modern musician with enhanced, convention-transcending, solipsism-overcoming, skepticism-vanquishing judgmental capacities, then the proper form this science will take is the orderly quest for an ordered account of musical ordering, an account of how "the moves that make up a given musical improvisation or composition (real or tonal answer, consequent phrase, authentic cadence) are as they are because they contribute to the tendency on the part of performances and compositions toward coherence and euphony" (98). In a nutshell, then, *Stilistik* or *Stilwissenschaft* erects theoretical scaffolds whose schematic purpose is to prop up the "teleological explanation" (99) of "organic relatedness" (98), and style-ologists undertake this theory-building with a view to empowering musical judgments to be something more and other than subjective expressions of preference.

But how does musical stylistics, so channelized, flow into the broader current of historical materialism? Hammel's answer is that musical conceptual schemes are "determined by the level of technology available to musicians at any given time" (102). It was Marx who bequeathed to posterity the most enduring and adaptable explanation of technological development, a phenomenon Marx saw as an inevitable byproduct of the dynamics of eat-or-be-eaten competition among capitalist firms; and so, on what Hammel regards as the properly Marxian conception of it, the

> *telos* of music history is understood to be the production of broadly useful music in ever greater quantity and involving the fewest demands on the musician's time, brain, and muscle. A materialist conception of music history can also serve as a basis for understanding how music's formal structures appear to gather together in distinct styles. (102)

In skeletal form: forces of production determine relations of production, which generate musical concepts, which (in and through their compositional/improvisational application) partition the musical-social universe into stylistic-idiomatic galaxies. Hammel puts flesh on the bones of this skeleton in chapter 6, "Forces and Relations of Musical Production," which presents case studies meant to illustrate how musical style has exhibited responsiveness to technological advancement. For example, because basso continuo allows the "skilled musician [to] improvise whole fugues at the keyboard," it follows that "advanced thoroughbass practice … served to partially automate the writing of counterpoint" (116), and thus playing from the figures "can be understood as a species of automation" (115). Moreover, since the *Volkommene Kappelmeister*'s compositional and performative exploitation of and reliance on bass figuration "depend[s] on the deployment of patterns and conventions" (115), the art of thoroughbass is a productivity-boosting conceptual breakthrough that is also a style determinant. All told, then, *MCMH*'s Marx-inspired explanatory paradigm follows this sequence of causal steps: the whip of competition creates an imperative of efficiency, which impels technological-*cum*-cognitive innovations, which spawn normative-conceptual musical schemata, which inform and regulate the creative and performative enactment of musical styles.[12] Hence the normativity of the normative historical materialism that is the

cosmetic, not devastating. The quick and dirty solution to them, one indicated by Hammel's own music-historical case studies (see below), which are vivid and excellent, is to adjust the scope of his account so that its current zoomed-in focus on the propriety of intraopus compositional choices gets zoomed out so as to accommodate within its field of vision the investigation of the *grounds of norm-governed music-centered actions* quite generally. This amplification of purview would represent a transition from style understood as *musical grammar* to style understood as *overall mode of musicking*.

[11] Given that style *just is* conventional—differently put, style is *institutional*, not *natural*—and given that individual subjective style preferences are possible, actual, and (in the musical Tower of Babel that is aesthetic modernity) unavoidable, I fail to see how an observationally, descriptively, and explanatorily adequate "science of style" would or could do anything to ward off such "skepticism." Either we will say, descriptively and neutrally, that a musical move in fact conforms with a style, which is to say no more than that it *is* conventional, relative to some convention; or we will say, evaluatively and approvingly, that we *endorse* a musical move, perhaps (but not necessarily) because we antecedently endorse the convention relative to which it is conventional. But no science of style can tell us what to endorse. If you are a skeptic about the legitimacy of the aesthetic values that underwrite such endorsements, a science of style is not the cure-all that will alleviate your unhappy condition.

[12] In *Capital Volume 1*, Marx presents a theory of technological innovation according to which it is a byproduct of *capitalistic interfirm economic warfare*. Capitalists innovate with a view to increasing productivity, which is for the sake of increasing the intrafirm rate

centerpiece of *MCMH* comes down to the methodological prescription that we *ought* to carry out music-historical inquiry as inquiry into how and when and where and why *objects and events of musical import*—most pivotally, for Hammel, style-bound compositional *choices*—fit into that causal sequence, whether as (as the Scholastics would say) causal agents or causal patients.

MCMH ends with an appendix provocatively titled "The Harmonic Ideology." This section explores Hammel's many-sided misgivings about "the modern theory of harmony" (135), meaning Roman numeral analysis, with its assumption of chordal invertibility, together with statistical generalizations about what patterns of chord succession are common. Hammel alleges that this theory (1) does a poor job of explaining the "apparent regularity of musical motion" (139), (2) is an idea that "can be profitably abandoned in favour of properly scientific ones" (142), and (3) comes wholly unmoored from concrete musical practice, and can thus be wholly discounted on grounds of total irrelevance to actually existing harmonic customs.[13] Ergo "harmonic ideology" stands in need of "a Marxist critique" that "would aim at … centering the conditions of musical production" (141). Carrying out this critique means, as a first order of business, "abandoning the assumption that Rameau and his followers made genuine scientific discoveries" (141).[14] Upon roundly repudiating Rameau's penchant for arid, practice-independent, pseudo-scientific speculation,

> the materialist music theorist might replace theoretical with pragmatic concepts in an effort to reconstruct the tools of a music making practice on its own terms. Those terms need not be found in theoretical writing correspondent with a given style or period. Rather, one can look for conceptual determinacy embedded in the process of production itself.[15] (143)

of profit, which is for the sake of increasing market share, which is for the sake of eliminating competition, which is for the sake of avoiding elimination. This means that the Marxian-economistic concept of *productivity* can get no real grip on productive-creative circumstances in which what counts as a *unit of output* and a *unit of input* is not well defined. An increase in productivity, in Marx's technical sense, is just a proportional decrease in units of input, measured not in physical quantities but in monetary value, relative to units of output, likewise measured in money. And this ratio is only pertinent as a metric for comparing different capitalist firms at a time or a single capitalist firm at two different times. But it will not do to ask, if it is asked in the language of Marxese: "did J. S. Bach's use of figured bass allow him to be more *productive* than Palestrina?" John Cage came up with a slick trick for composing a piece of music (*ORGAN2/ASLSP: As Slow as Possible*) that will last for 639 years. This probably represents a world record for ratio of duration of musical work (in the sense of compositional process) to duration of musical work (in the sense of compositional product). But it does not thereby count as a productive innovation in Marx's technical sense. There are a few historical vignettes in *MCMH* to which the authorized Marxian concept of productivity seemed to me to be similarly inapplicable, or at least not obviously and unproblematically applicable. For instance, in speaking of the "rules of counterpoint" (110) as tools for upping "productive capacity" (111), Hammel claims that "in a meaningful (even if not straightforwardly quantifiable) sense, more music is made by musicians 'singing upon the book' than by the same number performing a monophonic chant" (111). But, for the Marxian economist interested in productivity and efficiency, for "more music" to be meaningful, it needs to be exactly like "more potatoes" (or, actually: "more dollar's worth of potatoes")—i.e., straightforwardly quantifiable. This objection concerns how germane one of Hammel's illustrative examples is; it is not an objection to the Marxian model of productive dynamics that Hammel appropriates, or to his decision to appropriate it. Most of Hammel's musical examples are pre-1800, and thus antedate the full fruition of industrial capitalism and the systematic, wholesale, literal *commodification* of music that came in its wake. (The exception is a section titled "Organized Musical Labor," which is exemplary, and which concerns musical unionism in the 19th and 20th centuries.) I look forward to future work in which Hammel fixes his analytical attention on musical style(s) in the epoch of industrial-capitalist ascendancy.

[13] The suggestion that root-based analysis of chords is irrelevant to practice leaves out of consideration the many practices in which practical, practicing musicians do indeed think and talk in terms of chord roots. The Nashville Number System, for example, is very much a pragmatic component of a living, breathing musical culture.

[14] This seems to me to elide scientific "discovery" (of hitherto unknown facts) with the postulation of entity-types via the adoption of ontological frameworks—Kane's problematic, as we are about to see. The question, that is, is not whether it is a "scientific discovery" that triads are invertible; the question is whether a certain chord-typology gives us a potentially scientifically (or otherwise) useful vocabulary with which to enunciate the content of empirical observations about music, such as the observation that V^4_2 chords like to go to I6 chords in such-and-such contexts.

[15] Setting to one side the question of how scrupulous or charitable Hammel's reading of Rameau is, we can note that Hammel closely hews to the type of reasoning that spurs Gjerdingen's repudiation of Roman numeral analysis, theories of sonata form, and Schenkerian analysis, which Gjerdingen variously deprecates as "fetish-object[s]" (Gjerdingen 2007, 415), "totalizing theoretical ideolog[ies]" (435), and "metaphysical solution[s] to a self-inflicted problem" (425). Hammel strikes a critical note that has a Gjerdingenian timbre when he tells us that "the Romanesca represents a practical solution to a voice leading problem, namely, the bass accompaniment of voices moving in parallel thirds or sixths. Interpreted as a chord progression, the Romanesca does not conform to a theory of chordal syntax derived from harmonic theory. Indeed, the progression itself is not best understood as expressing or representing harmonic motion at all" (143). Don't get me wrong, I like a good linear-intervallic pattern, and hate extraneous Roman numerals, just as much as the next Schenkerian. But I fear that this Rameau-vicide is too hasty by half. I don't know whose "theory of chordal syntax" Hammel has in mind, but presumably the prevalence of the Romanesca in a given repertory should be treated as an important *datum* that a syntactic theory of that repertory must accommodate; and a demonstrable lack of "conformance" indicates, in the first place, the need to revise our provisional syntactic claims, not yet a need to summarily abandon the root-talk in terms of which we couch those syntactic claims. Also, plainly, the Romanesca is not the least bit recalcitrant to description in terms of root motion: it goes I–V–vi–iii (or I6). David Temperley has raised an ob-

The ensuing "socialist materialist music theory" (144) will be well placed to explain "the apparent regularity of voice-leading with reference to productive efficiency, social history and the structure of institutions" (144).[16] And success in this venture will pay political dividends, for it will allow the music theorist to

> make historically informed recommendations to the planners of the music making system in a post-capitalist order in which most productive enterprise is owned and operated in common. It would be both impossible and undesirable to attempt to re-establish something like the eighteenth-century training system in the twenty-first century. That said, understanding the precedent provides future planners with a model for which conditions are most conducive to the emergence of a common musical language in which most are able to freely improvise.[17] (144)

Now to sum up. The axial historical materialist methodological injunction, as it is formulated by Hammel, and as it applies to "musicking," is, prescinding from a few finer-grained details: understand musical styles as coherent, autonomous, norm-governed social practices that establish (what appropriately inculcated and acculturated practitioners regard as) justificatory or "right-making" relations—grammatical licensings—between (the compositional products of) reason-guided musical actions; understand the style-defining, practice-constituting norms as consequent upon (or as in some non-implicational way consonant or congruent with) technical innovation; and understand technical innovation as a paradigmatically economic, and endogenously capitalist, phenomenon. Notwithstanding my squeamishness about how a few of those finer-grained details get worked out by Hammel, I think his injunction amounts to—and I don't intend this as rhetorical hyperbole—something like the aptest thing that has ever been said about how to cast music history in a historical-materialist mold, which, cards on the table, is how I think it should be cast.[18] And perhaps Hammel has come along to say it at a time when music scholars have the ears to hear it, since style study is no longer in such bad odor,[19] is no longer looked upon as "one of the old, now discarded, shibboleths" (Taruskin 1989, 158) of a musty, fustian, bygone epoch of historical musicology, and since Marx is no longer all that much of a bogeyman, at least to members of a younger, post-postmodern cohort of academics.

In a 2013 review of Michael Cuthbert's *Music21: a Toolkit for Computer-aided Musicology*, Dmitri Tymoczko said something witty that stuck in my head: "Indeed, the first piece of advice I give to beginning theory graduate students is

jection to Gjerdingen that is similar in spirit: "[G]alant music—like common-practice music generally—is largely built around certain patterns of root motion in relation to the tonic. Indeed, many of Gjerdingen's schemata could well be characterized partly in terms of functional root progressions. In some cases, using scale degrees and figured bass, as Gjerdingen does, works just as well. But consider a pattern like the Fonte. This virtually always occurs in a harmonic context that can be very efficiently described in Roman-numeral terms: V^6_5/ii–ii–V^6_5–I. Gjerdingen's definition of the schema … seems less precise (or, at best, a more cumbersome way of saying the same thing)" (Temperley 2006, 284). The wider point here is that, although Gjerdingen likes to advertise his allergy to Roman numerals, his system nevertheless interprets verticalities in terms of keys, bass scale degrees, and figured bass, such that his designations are (quite literally) logically equivalent to Roman-numeric/inversional designations. Gjerdingen makes an ideological mountain out of what is actually a lexical molehill—a distinction in nomenclature that captures no deep conceptual difference—and his abjuration of Roman numerals is, to that extent, a case of terminological *parti pris* bereft of substantive import. I owe this insight to a number of conversations I have had with Tom Ingram about the potential conceptual equivalence of notationally distinct music-analytical designations.

[16] A strong case could be made that Gjerdingen 2007 does *exactly* this. Thanks to Tom Ingram for bringing this to my attention.

[17] This passing allusion to "planners of the music making system in a post-capitalist order"—Ministers of Proletarian Culture?—smuggles in some assumptions about the desirability of central planning that seem to me to be detachable from historical materialism as a mode of inquiry and explanation. And they happen to be assumptions I do not share. I think, and I think that Marx thought, that the point of inaugurating a "post-capitalist order" is to make people freer, indeed radically free, not to make their art-making activities more beholden to bureaucratic administration and more managed by "planners." Marx and Engels looked forward to the withering away of the state—"The state is not abolished, it dies out" (*der Staat wird nicht „abgeschafft", er stirbt ab*) as Engels put it in his *Anti-Dühring* (Engels [1887] 1996). In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx asked: "What changes will the state organization undergo in a communist society? In other words, what social functions still remain there which are analogous to the present functions of the state?" (Marx [1875] 1999c). The answer he seems to favor is: no functions that cannot be adequately fulfilled by decentralized, voluntary, maximally free association of uncoerced autonomous individuals. Similarly, in embracing Hammel's normative historical materialism, one need not also embrace the presupposition that a "common musical language" is an unquestionable desideratum, nor the presupposition that we (i.e., we Marxists) ought to aspire to "musical communism" in which "general musical skills [are expected] to reach a high enough level that most are able to participate in music making, both on a small scale for domestic use, and as part of large-scale ensembles when greater forces are called for" (128). Consider that, for all we (i.e., we Marxists) know, "large-scale ensembles"—I see *Männerchöre* and Berlioz orchestras in my mind's eye—may well be historically parochial and destined to go the way of drive-in movies and the glass armonica. My point is that central planners, universal musical grammar, and large ensembles all need to be defended independently. They aren't bundled together with historical materialism as parts of a package deal.

[18] This is partly an index of how many inapt and inept things Adorno said, partly an index of how there are no pre-Hammel counterparts in musicology to (e.g.) towering Marxist art historians Arnold Hauser and Meyer Schapiro. (I am not tempted to describe Georg Knepler or János Maróthy as "towering.")

[19] I consider the corpus studies revolution in music theory to be a resuscitation of style study, one that used quantitative methods as a defibrillator.

'learn music21.' We may be waiting for our Siegfried, but we have found his *Nothung*" (Tymoczko 2013, [1]). I can't resist stealing and modifying Tymoczko's quip. *MCMH* is short, fragmentary, and often elliptical, mostly in ways that conduce to its readability, occasionally in ways that provoke finicky philosophical and Marxological compunction. As befits a work that so assiduously broadcasts its abundant fellow-feeling for the Second International, its chapters read a bit like pamphlet manifestos—again, in a manner that is mostly rousing and occasionally frustrating. So I would say that, as far as historical-materialist method in the world of music studies goes, we may be waiting for our *Nothung*—Hammel's next book?—but we have at the very least found its shards, not to mention *unseren jungen Siegfried*.

2. Hearing Double

Onward to applied historical materialism. My comments about *HD* will contain less in the way of summary than did my comments about *MCMH*. That is partly because much of *HD* is given over to music analysis, the value and insights of which cannot survive synopsis. It is also partly because there are other published reviews of *HD* that summarize it ably (Chandrasekhar 2024; Mendelssohn 2025). So, to adapt Wittgenstein's dictum: whereof I need not speak, thereof I shall be silent. My overriding concern will be with how *HD* conforms to (without purposely following) *MCMH*'s historical materialist recipe, with what are, to my way of thinking, most impressive results.

Still, a cursory overview of the book's format is in order, so that readers will have some inkling of which bits of *HD* I am leaving out of account or giving short shrift to. The book has two halves. Part I, "Ontology," takes a stand on the metaphysics of musical structure, partly by settling scores with analytic philosophers of art (Peter Kivy, Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies, Andrew Kania, et al.), partly by advancing its own positive proposal about jazz ontology (i.e., that jazz standards *are networks*). Part II, "Auditory Culture," passes from ontology to history and aesthetics, tracing out how, before and after World War II, the American popular music ecosystem and soundscape had as its mainstay the live radio broadcast of performances of multiple competing arrangements of a single jazz standard. This "standard-ized" musical culture was subsequently transformed by the postwar rise of the disc jockey and televised hit parade, and the resulting shift in the auditory culture's aesthetic center of gravity—basically, from cabinet radio to car radio, and from all radio to TV—explains the eventual decline of the standard. Kane wraps things up by contending that the proper—historically authentic, culturally savvy, etc.—way to listen to a standard is by "hearing double": the adept listener actively compares the formal properties of a present performance with the (developmental genealogy of the) formal properties of past performances.

How does *HD* put into practice those historiographic norms that *MCMH* promulgates? Kane holds that the activity of playing jazz standards is a complex social action, one that—if I may paraphrase Kane by using a conceit that is not his own—gets acted out within a two-dimensional normative grid. One dimension of the grid corresponds to the performative-compositional axis of musical reproduction, recreation, revision, substitution, and the like. This dimension is governed by codes and conventions that regulate how to, in effect, play the same thing, but not in the same way. (*Semper idem sed non eodem modo*, as Schenker's famous Latinization has it.) What Kane calls "practices of replication, where one musical bit is substituted for another, and where the success of its identity or individuation depends on its social context of use," function as action-contexts within which performers can musically implement "culturally specific ways of demonstrating likenesses" (184). Kane's what-versus-how parsing of the performative situation makes good sense; indeed, the idea verges on being self-evident: when some jazzers play "Body and Soul" in their own way, they play (1) what is, owing to salient "likenesses" with past playings, something recognizable as "Body and Soul"; and they play it in (2) what is, owing to the uniqueness of their "substitutions," a manner that is recognizably their own. The matter of the *re-identifiability* of one and the same standard across nonidentical renditions brings us to the other dimension of the normative grid, the (re)cognitive-linguistic axis of reference, attribution, classification, designation, and the like. This dimension is governed by codes and conventions that regulate how to *talk about* what is reproduced, recreated, revised, substituted for, etc. Within what Kane calls "practices of nomination," musicians play the language game of "identifying the song that they are preparing to play by associating it with a network of previous performances of that song" (147). Again, this is patently true and needs no argumentation on its behalf, as Kane is the first to acknowledge: "This is not a theoretical issue; composers name their works. Names are emblazoned on performances, recordings, and inscriptions" (147). Less truistic, and more intriguing, is Kane's attendant socio-hermeneutic claim that one who calls a tune thereby makes a pledge to, enters into a quasi-contract with, the audience: "A name promises that the music we are about to play will be a successful replication, based on those previous performances yet without specifying any properties in particular" (148). The takeaway from all this is that the fact that a sonic token *gets to count* as a performance of the "Body and Soul" type is not a purely acoustic, or a purely music-structural, fact. Instead it is a fact that depends on shared

intragroup attitudes of approval and acceptance (etc.); it is thus a fact that is at once *normative* and *social*. "For me," Kane announces, "the mechanisms of replication and nomination—the two main processes that I will theorize as involved in the reproduction of the jazz repertoire—are thoroughly social in nature" (10).

And doubtless they are thoroughly social. So doubtless is this that we might wonder: to whom do these mechanisms appear otherwise? Kane's answer is: those pesky analytic ontologists, i.e., antisocial (pun intended) analytic philosophers who like to argue about what they call the "ontology" of musical entities. As you probably know, "ontology" is a much used and (especially when used in the plural) abused word, one by which many different people mean many different things. Even if we limit ourselves to inspecting usages of the term that have currency within analytic philosophy, we find that the word is still multiply ambiguous. It carries at least these three senses:

1) Ontology$_1$, or *existential ontology*, hereafter "one-tology": inquiry into what there fundamentally is, or into what the most basic constituents of reality are. *Materialism* is a one-tology according to which (in one of its versions) only matter is *really* real, or according to which (in another of its versions) all facts are reducible to facts about how the primary physical components of reality are configured.
2) Ontology$_2$, or *categorial ontology*, hereafter "two-tology": inquiry into which *category* of basic constituent (as identified by a one-tology) some (type of) object or entity belongs to. Thus Platonism about musical works (a type of entity) holds that musical works are atemporal, nonspatial abstract objects (a category of basic constituent). Platonism of this stripe, as a two-tology, is premised on a one-tology that (unlike a materialist one-tology) countenances the existence of abstracta.
3) Ontology$_3$, or *descriptive sociolinguistic ontology*, hereafter "three-tology": inquiry into what entities are, in fact and in practice, "quantified over"—overtly postulated or covertly presupposed—in some actually existing discourse. Thus we might observe that numbers are quantified over in the three-tology of the discourse of mathematics—inasmuch as players of this language game use numeral-nouns such as "five" and "pi"—or we might describe the three-tology of a programming language (or: we might three-tologically describe a programming language) as consisting of various data-types standing in various relationships. And, notably, we might do so without also having any settled views about whether numbers or data-types are Platonic objects or not (according to a two-tology) or about whether they are *really* real or not (according to a one-tology).[20]

As I read it, *HD* propounds a three-tology. On Kane's own definition, a musical ontology "is an enumeration and description of the kinds of things that make up the production and reception of music (e.g. notes, chords, melodies, works, performances, recordings, broadcasts, and so forth)" (182). That "so forth," needless to say, includes Kane's hobby-horse, the jazz standard, and, as we already saw, "the ontology of the standard emerges from ongoing acts of replication and nomination" (10). Importantly for Kane's narrative, this means that "the social forces that structure the success or failure of these [acts] are integral to ontological consideration" (10). And, importantly for my narrative, those "social forces" include what Hammel calls "forces of production" and "relations of production." Kane tells an admirably careful and nuanced tale, one that abounds in historical and sociological detail, about how the normative contours of past practices of replication and nomination have both registered and reacted to both (1) revolutions in recording and broadcasting technology (forces of production) and (2) reconfigurations of the institutional framework for commodity production and distribution (relations of production). I stress Kane's carefulness and nuance not just to pay him a compliment, but also to point up the gratifying fact that there is no Adornian hand-waving in *HD* about the "interrelationship between radio technique and monopolistic society" (Adorno 2009, 389) and suchlike. Very much unlike Adorno, Kane doesn't write any explanatory checks he can't cash. (Hammel pillories Adorno; Kane just outdoes the Frankfurter.) Rather, most especially in chapter 5, "The Soundscape of Standards," he diligently connects the causal dots, detailing how technological progress has ripple effects in the musical marketplace, which induce corresponding changes in auditory culture, which prompt adjustments and adaptations in the sphere of musical technique. I was quite taken with Kane's discussion of how "the sonic properties of recordings"—within a musical marketplace and "auditory culture of reception" in which the purchasable, ownable recording is the foremost unit of economic and aesthetic significance—"helped sound [itself] to become a sufficiently work-determinative property" (196). Kane met and exceeded the burden of proof in making the case that "technology … afforded [more focused] attention to sound as such" (196)—i.e., to the total sonic-timbral profile of a recorded rock song, not just to its generic chord progressions and transplantable tunes.

[20] My thoughts about these different senses of "ontology" took shape during a series of discussions with Tom Ingram, whose independent study on music ontology I advised during the fall semester of 2025.

I cannot recall ever having been unreservedly convinced by an argument that sought to link capitalist technological development to cultural sea changes in the prevailing compositional use of musical materials.[21] But I can think of no reservations to air about *HD*'s tight argument that breakthroughs in "the new recording technology of magnetic tape" (193) collaterally enabled "communities of listeners [to be] convinced (recruited, assembled, joined in the stance) that [sound] provided the most important criterion for the identity of the work" (196), or about its argument that this shift in communal reception norms went hand in glove with an increased compositional "emphasis on specific sonic properties only available in the studio" (197).

Once more, when I say that Kane's ontology is a threetology, I mean that it is, at root, an elucidation of how and why (by their own lights) certain musical agents take and treat certain instances of the production of musical sounds, but not others, *as* performances of a certain jazz standard, but not others. *HD*'s "ontological account" (78) is an account of how, within the confines of jazz practice (or of *a* jazz practice), a paramount normative status—the status of being a (performance of a) standard—gets accorded to whatever is collectively held to be deserving of this status, per the shared senses and sensibilities of authorized status-conferers. Kane puts forward what he calls "the network model" as a tool for graphically depicting the characteristic patterns and protocols of the apposite status-conferring activities. "A standard might be depicted as a network," he writes,

> one in which the nodes represent distinct performances and in which node-to-node relations (or edges) represent similarities and differences among performances. And yet, a standard is not any particular node in this network, but a permissive set of protocols, rules, strategies, and customs that emerges from the network in its holism. (7)

If I understand Kane's model correctly, performance-nodes represent acts of both replication (i.e., "the selection of some, but not all, properties [of a previous performance] in order to produce an object that is substitutable for [it]" [62]) and nomination (i.e., the designation or identification of a particular performance as being *of* a named standard). So, in 1953, Art Tatum recorded some novel but familiar-sounding strains at the piano (replication) and then (or beforehand) called what he played "Body and Soul" (nomination). Let this musico-linguistic action be represented by a terminal node on a directed graph. In executing that action, Tatum would be (1) inviting us to make various comparisons: comparisons with, for example, his own 1938 performances of the standard—let this be represented by a parent node—or with the original 1930 version by Johnny Green that influenced the 1938 performance—let Green's rendition be represented by the graph's root node. He would also be (2) marking for our attention certain contextually accentuated musical features (the ones in virtue of which his latest performance counts as a replication and, contrastingly, the ones in virtue of which it appreciably deviates from what it replicates). And he would also be (3) contributing to the gradual shaping of our overall concept of "Body and Soul," our ever-evolving sense of the standard's constellation of individuating characteristics.

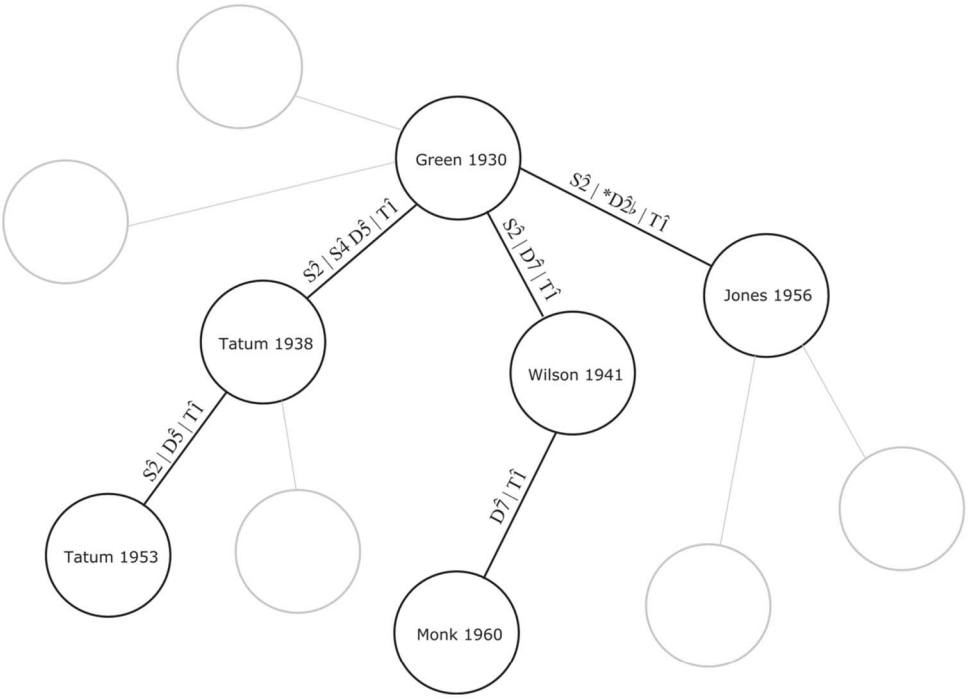
Now take all of the nodes—Tatum's and everyone else's—that can be traced back, via all the directed edges, to Johnny Green's ur-performance of "Body and Soul." The resulting graph *is*—or, I think it would be better to say, *captures the content of our concept of*—"Body and Soul" itself, *in abstracto*, i.e., over and above all the different versions of it. Example 1 is an incomplete sketch of such a graph.[22]

In case my rundown of the nuts and bolts of the model has obscured the model's connection with historical materialism: the network model is a model of *normative historical praxis*. Replication and nomination are public performances and public enunciations, respectively, situated inside social practices governed by communal norms, practices the practicing of which takes on particular cultural meanings and particular aesthetic significances in particular (synchronic), evolving (diachronic) historical contexts. And those communal norms, *qua* communal, have as their source of authority nothing other than the consensus of the community of musical producers and consumers: "if a community accepts an object as a substitute, then it is one" (62). A performance is a performance of standard X if it is offered and accepted as a performance of standard X.[23] An upshot of Kane's dependency thesis—his view that standard-status is relative to social ratification—is that, as intimated earlier, since our social practices can change over time, (our concept of what it is to be an instance of) a particular, name-bearing jazz standard can also change over time. Jazz standards are mutable, and the path of their mutation, as encoded in a Kaneian network, is a path set by how we see fit

[21] Even the arguments in Parkhurst and Hammel 2019, all of which I stand by, seem to me to lack the irresistible persuasive force of some of Kane's arguments, owing to Kane's superior marshalling of details.

[22] The graph's edge labels indicate chord choices (of the composer whose name is in the label of the parent node) with a function label—**t**onic, **s**ubdominant, or **d**ominant—and a bass scale degree.

[23] We should recollect, at this juncture, Hammel's proposal that the materialist conception of music history promotes the attainment of "a theoretical understanding of musical norms that makes them amenable to scientific investigation" (79), where that investigation amounts to "the process of making explicit to consciousness what these norms are and how they come to have the normative force and content that they do" (87).



Example 1. Kane, Figure 2.10, p. 77.

to conduct our music-creative and music-appreciative social practices; it is a path whose twists and turns are dictated by what role we ask and allow certain musical deeds and certain concomitant acoustical events to play in the auditory lifeworld we co-inhabit. We—where "we" means "we the productive and appreciative members of the jazz community"—thus do and must make "judgments about the identity and individuation" of jazz standards in the absence of any presumption of "fixed structure" (59), i.e., in the absence of any presumption that there are permanently applicable necessary and sufficient structural (chordal, linear-melodic, etc.) conditions a sound sequence has to satisfy in order to be an exemplification of one or another jazz standard.

As you can see, the network model is a fairly simple way of mapping out a genealogy of *influence*—by no means a new preoccupation in music theory. For the most part, this simplicity is a strength. One measure of the model's utility is how effective it is at throwing into relief—indeed, at literally drawing a picture of—the significant differences that distinguish the jazz community's norms from those that are indigenous to other zones of music-making and music-taking. I cannot imagine that, having once encountered Kane's explanation of how it is that differing replication and nomination conventions alter the way the "work concept" operates in the disparate ideological economies of jazz culture, rock culture, and classical culture, any reader will hanker for an altogether different *kind* of account. Without question, I would say, Kane is barking up the right tree. Still, simplicity comes at the cost of some sacrifice in exactness, and the model has drawbacks that stem from Kane's willingness to make this sacrifice. Case in point: the structure of all of Kane's graphs suggests that any given act of replication is a replication of one and only one immediate antecedent and thus belongs to one and only one lineage of replications. In graph-theoretic lingo: every node in Kane's graphs other than the root has an in-degree of exactly one.[24] But this flies in the face of the musical facts on the ground. For, manifestly, later performances can simultaneously draw on more than one earlier precedent. This shortcoming wouldn't be hard to fix. Again in graph-theoretese: simply allow the nodes' in-degree to be greater than one, such that the depicted networks are, formally, directed acyclic graphs instead of arborescences (rooted trees).

(Speaking more loosely, what we want is a river that has both tributaries and branches, and one whose branches and tributaries themselves have branches and tributaries.) After that, even more sophistication could be brought into

[24] Granted, I didn't catch Kane anywhere insisting that networks *must* be like this. But I also did not catch him allowing that they *needn't* be like this, and allowing for that possibility seems like it ought to be a high theoretical priority.

the mix by the use of weighted edges reflecting differing proportions of influence.

That such tweaks are called for does not impugn the architecture of the model that calls for them; if anything, it shows the resilience and flexibility of the model. But I can think of objections that are not so easily blocked by piecemeal tweaking of formalisms. For instance, I doubt that it is really the case that replications can always be justly regarded as "chained" to one another. Suppose an encyclopedically knowledgeable jazz musician is familiar with the whole network of a standard, in whatever state of flux the standard is in at some snapshotted moment in its continuous development. And now suppose that this musician gives a performance of the standard that proceeds from this holistic familiarity, a performance that is steered by an impressionistic gut feeling for the "gist" of the totality of the network, and that is not (as a matter of psychological and volitional fact) directly influenced or guided by any one past performance. In such a case, what, if anything, is being *replicated*? And how should the graph of this performative scenario be drawn? Would it need to have all the old nodes (or all the old terminal nodes?) linked to a single new node? But that picture of things seems unavoidably to suggest deliberate selection of, or definitive influence by, a finite catalogue of individuated features of discrete past performances—not the sort of holistic guidance by an all-embracing gestalt that my thought experiment attributes to my imaginary jazz virtuoso. And here's the kicker: surely the presence of some significant element of "gut-feeling holism," or whatever you want to call it, is really the rule rather than the exception in the playing of jazz standards (even non-encyclopedically-knowledgeable playings) and in other cognate performative practices. To see what I mean, take, for comparison, a "replicative" performative practice such as telling an old joke. Sure, we *might* be able to forensically pick apart how a particular telling of it constitutes (perhaps unbeknownst to the teller) a selection or rejection of particular features of the particular erstwhile tellings with which our comic happens to be familiar. And, sure, the teller *might* even consciously carry out that winnowing, so that the concepts of *selection* and *rejection* are unproblematically felicitous to invoke in offering a "network" interpretation of the telling-action. But, in many or most cases, many or most aspects of a joke-telling (even a highly premeditated, highly rehearsed telling) are going to be better conceived of as products of a creative act that springs from a loose mental prototype—one shaped in *fantastically* complicated ways by the teller's exposure to past tellings—not as products of a purposeful sifting (whether conscious or unconscious) and reassembling of features of a fairly small number of sharply-defined utterance-molecules stored up in the mind. How, then, do we graph joke telling? Well, it isn't obvious to me that we would always or ever want to graph it, because it isn't obvious to me that the mental construct of a genealogy of individuated features is always or ever entirely apropos. And likewise with jazz.

I spotted a few other pickable nits as I combed through *HD*. But none of my analytic-philosophical nit-picking came close to changing my mind about how Kane's model does a respectable job of rendering more conceptually tractable some vital aspects of some complicated and interesting musical-social practices. However, I did, in my capacity as an analytic philosopher, find myself visited by a more foundational, less shakable reservation about *HD*'s extended confrontation with analytic philosophy itself, which occupies much of Part 1 of the book. And this brings me to the topic with which I will hurry up and conclude: the ways in which *MCMH* and *HD* can, as I mentioned at the outset, be read as serendipitously mutually critiquing documents.

Conclusion: The Mutual Critique

If you will indulge me, I am going to momentarily turn this double review into a triple review, and an anachronistic one at that, by observing that *HD* closely hews to the template established by its notable forebear, Lydia Goehr's *Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.[25] In each book, there is an initial forest-clearing effort whereby the author attempts to refute views about musical ontology defended by prominent analytic aestheticians. After the slash-and-burn opening gambit, the author then sows the seeds of what is supposed to be a new, appropriately historicized species of ontology that shall supplant and surpass the old, inappropriately ahistorical, "essentialist" species. The trouble with this is that, in both books, what actually happens is that there is an extended polemic against various *two-tologies* (categorial ontologies) that is then followed by the advancement of an orthogonal *three-tology* (a descriptive sociolinguistic ontology).[26] Goehr spends about 100 pages taking swipes at "nominalism" (the view that "works

[25] Kane says that *Imaginary Museum*'s influence on *HD* "is operative at a level deeper than the endnotes" (9).

[26] I mean that the books polemicize against *what are in fact* two-tologies and advance *what are in fact* three-tologies, according to my taxonomy. I do not mean that Kane and Goehr advance three-tologies *under that description*, or that they criticize two-tologies *for being two-tologies*. Not at all: the whole issue, as I see it, is that Kane and Goehr do not observe the needed tripartite distinction, and thus see everything as undifferentiated "ontology." This leads them to mistakenly think that they are talking *to*, when in fact they are talking *past*, the analytic ontologists. Thanks to Evan Martschenko for prompting me to underscore this point.

are no more than linguistic items—general names or descriptions—serving as convenient ways to refer to certain classes of particulars and platonism" [17]) and "Platonism" (the view that "musical works are … contrary to common sense, … universals—perhaps even natural kinds—constituted by structures of sounds [that] lack spatio-temporal properties and exist everlastingly" [14]), and then pivots to charting out the history of "how the work-concept has actually functioned in practice" (6). Thirty-odd years later, Kane spends about 100 pages taking swipes at "realism" (the view that "musical works are real things, whether norm-kinds, initiated-types, or sound-structures" [130]) and then pivots to explaining how our evolving concept of a jazz standard tracks an unfolding history of more and more acts of replication and nomination, a history that can be modeled with a network. But in neither case does the pivot to historically situated conceptual practices refute or replace the pivoted-away-from two-tology. Instead, the pivot moves the bump in the rug, or kicks the can down the road, by introducing a new entity-type (the work-concept, the standard-network) that the zealous two-tologist will then feel the need to contrive a two-tological theory about. Goehr's history-of-the-work-concept approach does not constitute any kind of two-tological alternative to, never mind a disproof of, nominalism or Platonism, for the simple reason that the work concept is (because concepts in general are) something you can be a Platonist or a nominalist (etc.) about; and Kane's "network ontology" does not constitute any kind of two-tological alternative to, never mind a disproof of, realism, for the simple reason that a replication/nomination network is (because mathematical objects in general are) something you can either be a realist about or not.[27] Successful arguments on behalf of the network model do not *settle* the question about realism—they require that it be asked all over again. Although *HD* makes a show of placing its bets against realism, it turns out that it doesn't actually have its own horse in the two-tological race. That is because, as I've been insisting, the network model is straightforwardly and undeviatingly three-tological: it is a socio-historical account of how, in an auditory culture, members of that culture do in fact, in practice, take and treat—conceptually handle—sounds and sound-structures in a certain norm-guided way. Call this "ontology" if you like, but to my ear "anthropology" is the "ology"-suffixed word that rings more of the right bells. And if "anthropology" seems to be too broad a term for what Kane is up to, and if you don't like my annoying neologism "three-tology," then by all means use the term I introduced at the outset: *applied historical materialism*. For three-tology, as I understand it—or, perhaps, three-tology of a sufficiently historical and economic bent, as in Kane's book—*just is* applied historical materialism, as I understand it.

I therefore submit that *MCMH* functions as an inadvertent critique of *HD* in that *MCMH* reveals how *HD* labors under a partial misapprehension concerning its own genre. *HD* is not a work of ontology in the same sense that the works of ontology it butts heads with are works of ontology. Rather, as I began this essay by asserting, and as Hammel's normative historical materialism helps us to clearly see and perspicuously describe, *HD* is a work of applied historical materialism—a superb one. Like any contribution to social science worth its salt, *HD* adduces an explanatory model; and, like only some such contributions, *HD* adduces a model that is historical-materialist in the precise Hammel-approved sense, inasmuch as Kane's model addresses musical normativity by examining norm-governed musical practices within their enveloping cultural, technological, and economic matrix. But *HD* doesn't—and as far as I am concerned needn't and shouldn't—also propound a two-tology that stakes a claim as to what category of basic constituent of reality *networks* belong to. Are networks Platonic objects? Initiated norm-types? Sets of performances? Who cares? Certainly not the music theorists who will make up the bulk of Kane's readership. As a matter of psychological fact, nobody in Kane's audience needed to be *un*convinced of music-ontological realism before being convinced of the utility of the network model, and, as a matter of logical fact, realism (*qua* two-tology) and the network model (*qua* three-tology) are independent and compatible—they have no bearing on each other—so any such effort at unconvincing anyone is effort wasted. Given that *HD* is a work of applied historical materialism, and given that, accordingly and appropriately, it does not defend a two-tology,[28] I don't see why Kane should have dedicated any time or energy at all to locking horns with the analytic two-tologists. Hence I think readers of *HD* can, as it were, *divide through* by the whole issue of ontology, by fast-forwarding through all the parts of the book that extrane-

[27] The network model is not an alternative *two-tology* that replaces (say) Platonism *as a two-tology*. However, I am deeply sympathetic to the Wittgensteinian idea that advancing a successful three-tology is a method of dissolving rather than defeating (pointless, meaningless, confused, etc.) two-tological questions, a way of showing that the questions are idly posed, rather than incorrectly answered, by Platonists et al. So, in that Wittgensteinian, philosophically quietistic sense—which is not a sense that Kane brings out or leans on—the network model most certainly is an "alternative" to what Kane calls "realism."

[28] Kane does make negative two-tological assertions, e.g.: "A standard is not any particular node in this network, but a permissive set of protocols, rules, strategies, and customs that emerges from the network in its holism" (7). But, yet again, the question just re-arises as to what ontological status a "set of protocols" has. Are we to be realists, nominalists, Platonists, or what, about sets of protocols?

ously spar with work-ontological realism,[29] and maybe also by mentally substituting a phrase like "network-based elucidation of the content of our concepts of standards" every time Kane writes a phrase like "network-based ontology of standards" (10).

HD reciprocally critiques *MCMH* from a couple of different angles. For one, *HD*'s postulation and utilization of the network model shows that an explanatory project can abide by the methodological prescriptions *MCMH* issues without also being avowedly or identifiably Marxist in its political valence. This would seem to indicate that the mode of social science Hammel endorses is—contrary to his expressed wishes—strictly separable from the politics he wishes the science to serve (see note 18 above). The issue of separability has long been a self-wrought conundrum for Marxists, who have long wanted there to be something intrinsically politically revolutionary about the explanations (or about *understanding* or *accepting* the explanations) of capitalist development that Marx gives in *Das Kapital* and elsewhere. But this longed-for fusion of political and scientific horizons has never managed to hold up under much scrutiny. No causal explanation of a phenomenon—and Marx's explanations of technological development, the falling rate of profit, and so on, are, without question, causal explanations—ever implies (that we ought to hold) a normative commitment about what to do, or about whether to do anything, about the phenomenon in question, for the familiar Humean reason that an *is* can't imply an *ought*. There is no logical impediment to accepting everything *Das Kapital* says about how capitalism works and then saying "yeah, and that's a good way for an economy to work." Likewise, a Hammelian explanation of *why the musical norms are as they are* cannot, all on its own, tell us anything genuinely normative about *how they ought to be* (see note 12 above).[30] The other way *HD* makes critical contact with *MCMH* is by itself serving as evidence that the call *MCMH* issues for a radical methodological upheaval in music studies is a call that has, at least in some corners, already been answered. To Hammel's sound advice that we should get back to systematically investigating the sociality of musical norms, I think Kane and some others will want to reply: "Right on, and well taken, but what exactly do you think we've been doing—at least some select few of us—this whole time?" Whether or not Kane's applied historical materialism can be convincingly shown to have Adler and Hanslick somewhere in its pedigree (I doubt it), it does seem to be the case that the flame of "classical musicology" was never snuffed out, and needs, if anything, stoking, not rekindling. Even the more Marx-flavored version of the stylistics project, where style norms are supposed to get thoroughgoingly technologically and economically worked over and contextualized, will hardly seem unusual or unpalatable to those music scholars working within the scholarly groove carved out by the "two Leonards," namely Leonard Meyer and Leonard Ratner. And, going back just a little further in the history of music theory, I can think of a music theorist who, like Hammel, thought that Rameau got it all backwards, who saw pedantic textbook *Stufentheorie* as either irrelevant or inimical to musical praxis, who was keen to discover the ultimate *geistig* source of authority of musical norms, who held the rightness of musical action to be the proper object of formal-syntactic music analysis, who fervently believed that a commitment to organic coherence and teleological explanation could overcome "modern forms of skepticism" about musical style, and who desperately wanted music theory to be both a *Wissenschaft* and a form of politics/ethics. The guy I am thinking of was *not* a Marxist, and that's putting it mildly.[31] I am, of course, speaking of an eccentric Austrian piano teacher named

[29] The best reason to ignore these parts of Kane's book is that the analytic two-tology of music has given rise to some of the most tedious and pointless hairsplitting ever to be perpetrated across the entire history of Western philosophy, on which pathology see Ridley 2003 and Young 2011. Somewhat strangely, in light of that accusation, the second-best reason to ignore these parts of Kane's book is that his arguments against the analytic two-tologists do not approach the caliber of rigor one encounters in the two-tologists' own arguments for their own (utterly tedious and pointless) two-tological theories. While there is far, far more musical wisdom to be gleaned from Kane's analytical application of the network model than there is to be gleaned from (e.g.) anything Peter Kivy has written in defense of musico-metaphysical Platonism, this does not change the fact that Kivy's defense of his view is far more careful and rigorous than is Kane's breezy dismissal of it (and other views like it). I can well imagine the two-tological "realists" whom Kane lumps together and perfunctorily criticizes (see 129ff.) having a field day, in the pages of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* or the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, with both the lumping and the criticism.

[30] There is normativity operating at many different levels here, which might inflict some puzzlement. Hammel's historical materialism is normative (it tells us how to do music history), and the thing it tells us how to historicize is a normative creature (a style, constituted by various musical prescriptions and prohibitions). My point hereabouts is that doing music history in the recommended way, by giving descriptions and explanations of the structure of norm-governed musical practices, cannot settle the question of whether to normatively *endorse* those practices (or the musical moves that go on inside of them). There is also the separate and very different normative question of whether to endorse the historical materialist approach to music history in the first place. The reason to do that, I would hastily say, is that the approach yields robust and satisfying explanations of salient musical phenomena—normative styles. But, obviously, one needn't endorse the style itself to endorse the (norm-describing and norm-explaining) approach to historicizing the style.

[31] "Posterity (including the French, the English, and all who profited from crimes against Germany) will celebrate Hitler's historical service—that of having eradicated Marxism—with no less gratitude

Heinrich Schenker. A closing thought: If Hammel's Marxian historical-materialist music-theoretical normativism is, viewed from a sufficiently high conceptual altitude, a form of neo- or post- or meta-Schenkerism,[32] and if Kane's discerning, socially and culturally astute music-analytical engagement with jazz resonates with Hammel's Schenkerian Marxism—Schenker made hierarchical graphs of networks of tones, Kane makes hierarchical graphs of networks of tonal-social actions—then there is a lesson about ethics, a *moral* moral, to be learned from my extended juxtaposition of *MCMH* and *HD*. The lesson is most decidedly *not* that sympathetic vibrations with Schenker are somehow incriminating for Hammel and Kane or somehow rehabilitating for Schenker. Things are not—things rarely are—simple and clean-cut like that. Rather, the lesson is that the "politics of music analysis" (Agawu 2009) or the "ethics of music analysis" (Agawu 2004, 284n26), especially where they intersect and intertwine with the prior history and future development of Schenkerian thought (and of structuralism or organicist formalism more generally), with the music-analytical treatment of jazz (and of non-Western-classical music more generally), and with the forwarding of self-consciously revolutionary-emancipatory political initiatives (and of moral progressivism more generally) is tricky, treacherous territory. Navigating its terrain will require defter maneuvers than that of darkly and dourly intimating that some specific form of music analysis,[33] or music analysis in the large,[34] is indelibly ethically-politically compromised or permanently, congenitally morally problematic; nor, contrariwise, will we make any headway by glibly extolling some musical practices or repertoires or forms of musical structuration as essentially and innately liberatory or egalitarian[35] (e.g., jazz) while branding others as essentially and innately reactionary or irremediably tainted by atavistic regressiveness (e.g., "Western" "common-practice" "tonality"[36]). Musical styles, styles of conceptualizing music, and normative conceptions of how to fashion ourselves as cognitive, musical, moral, and political agents are bound together, both logically and historically, in knots far too tangled to be unpicked by the off-the-shelf Manichaeism that has, of late, occasionally passed for "critique in music studies."[37] For

> The web of our life is of a mingled yarn,
> good and ill together: our virtues would be proud
> if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes
> would despair, if they were not cherished by our
> virtues. (Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, Act 4, Scene 3)

I do not think that historical materialism is a magic bullet; even if it is a decent heuristic for devising explanations of the past, knowing how to interpret the world is still not the same as knowing how to change it.[38] But I do think that paying close attention to normative praxis (as it is actually carried out in the shared lives of human agents) in and across history (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)—the kind of attention-paying that, as I hope to have shown, Hammel and Kane demand and demonstrate—is a prerequisite for doing any justice whatsoever to the mingling of the yarn.

than they will celebrate the great deeds of the greatest Germans! If only unto music the man were born who would similarly root out the musical Marxists: this would require, above all else, that the masses draw nearer to this inherently esoteric art form—something, however, that is, and must remain, a *contradictio in adjecto*. 'Art' and the masses have never belonged together, nor will they ever belong together. But then where would one get the number of musical 'Brownshirts' one would need to succeed in driving out the musical Marxists?" (Schenker 1933, translation mine).

[32] On the topic of meta-Schenkerism as a conceptual precursor to Marxian historical materialism, see Parkhurst 2022b, 137–138.

[33] For overviews and thoughtful critiques of ethically- and politically-driven anti-formalism and anti-structuralism, see Scherzinger 2001 and 2022 as well as Horton 2001 and 2020.

[34] See Attas 2022 for discussion of how "the notion that music has elements to begin with, and even the notion that it is possible to isolate those elements from other sounds or a broader context" is a "Eurocentric—and by extension, colonial—aspect[ ] of music analysis." This suggestion raises an uncomfortable question about whether "the notion that music has elements to begin with" is, as Attas puts it, a mere *aspect* of music analysis, maybe one that could somehow be excised or ameliorated or turned against itself (in advancement of an anti-Eurocentric or anti-colonialist agenda), or whether instead music analysis by its very nature treats of parts and wholes—as indeed is suggested by the etymology of "analysis" (from "ana" = "up, back, throughout" + "lysis" = "a loosening," thus a resolution of what is complex into its constituent elements). If music analysis is essentially mereological, and if part-whole thinking is essentially Eurocentric and colonialist, it is hard to see how anything recognizable as music analysis could be ethico-politically redeemable. Needless to say, I would rather perform *modus tollens* than *modus ponens* on the conditional.

[35] See Walker 2001 and Parkhurst 2020 on this trend.

[36] See McClary 2024 on tonality's "authoritarian premises and its policing impulses" and on tonality as an "abstract ideal that transcends human culture, that demands the elimination of impurities for the sake of some notion of closure, presents in music a particularly visceral experience of this logic. Racist, anti-Semitic, misogynist. 'Tonality' has a lot to answer for" (151). Although McClary puts "tonality" in quotes, she seems to be using, not mentioning, the word—i.e., she seems to be talking about the misdeeds of the thing itself, not about the badness of having a music-theoretical *concept* of tonality. McClary also gives an interpretation of Ewell 2023 that holds that "Ewell has argued that tonality's hierarchical orientation and demands for eradicating dissonant elements resonate with a racist agenda" (ibid.)—where, again, the culprit is the thing, not the concept thereof.

[37] Hammel addresses this issue in chapter 3, p. 63ff.

[38] The eleventh of Marx's *Eleven Theses on Feuerbach*, which is also the epitaph on Marx's gravestone, reads: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it."

References

Adorno, Theodor. 2009. *Current of Music*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Agawu, Kofi. 2004. "How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back in Again." *Music Analysis* 23 (2/3): 267–286.

———. 2009. "The Dynamics of Orality and the Politics of Music Analysis." In *L'analyse musicale: une pratique et son histoire*, edited by Rémy Campos and Nicholas Donin, 123–130. Genève: Droz & Conservatoire.

Archard, David, and Kaspar Lippert-Rasmussen. 2013. "Applied Ethics." In *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, edited by Hugh LaFollette, 320–335. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Attas, Robin. 2022. "The Many Paths of Decolonization: Exploring Colonizing and Decolonizing Analyses of a Tribe Called Red's 'How I Feel.'" *Music Theory Online* 28 (2). https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.22.28.2/mto.22.28.2.attas.html.

Brandom, Robert. 2019. *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Chandrasekhar, Varun. 2024. "Review of *Hearing Double: Jazz, Ontology, Auditory Culture*, by Brian Kane." *Journal of Jazz Studies* 15 (2): 194–197.

Engels, Friedrich. (1877) 1996. "Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science." *Marx/Engels Internet Archive*. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/.

Ewell, Philip. 2023. *On Music Theory, and Making Music More Welcoming for Everyone*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Gjerdingen, Robert O. 2007. *Music in the Galant Style*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goehr, Lydia. 1992. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Horton, Julian. 2001. "Postmodernism and the Critique of Musical Analysis." *The Musical Quarterly* 85 (2): 342–366.

———. 2020. "On the Musicological Necessity of Musical Analysis." *The Musical Quarterly* 103 (1–2): 62–104.

Kagan, Shelly. 1992. "The Structure of Normative Ethics." *Philosophical Perspectives* 6: 223–242.

Marx, Karl. (1847) 1999a. "The Poverty of Philosophy." *Marx/Engels Internet Archive*. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/.

———. (1859) 1999b. "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy." *Marx/Engels Internet Archive*. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/index.htm.

———. (1875) 1999c. "Critique of the Gotha Program." *Marx/Engels Internet Archive*. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/.

McClary, Susan. 2024. "'Tonality' and Its Discontents." *Journal of Music Theory* 68 (1): 149–155.

Mendelssohn, Edmund. 2025. "Review of *Hearing Double: Jazz, Ontology, Auditory Culture*, by Brian Kane." *Twentieth-Century Music* 22 (1): 135–139.

Parkhurst, Bryan. 2017. "Making a Virtue of Necessity: Schenker and Kantian Teleology." *Journal of Music Theory* 61 (1): 59–109.

———. 2020. "Review of *Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era*, by Marianna Ritchey." *Music Theory Spectrum* 42 (2): 326–333.

———. 2022a. "Making Music Absolute Part 1: Theory." *Theoria: Historical Aspects of Music Theory* 27: 65–98.

———. 2022b. "Making Music Absolute Part 2: History." *Theoria: Historical Aspects of Music Theory* 27: 99–148.

———. 2023. "Completing the Triad: Schenker and Kantian Practical Philosophy." In *Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory: Essays in Honor of Kevin Korsyn*, edited by Bryan Parkhurst and Jeffrey Swinkin, 260–329. New York: Routledge.

———. 2024a. "Music as Capitalist Icon." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 82 (3): 315–329.

———. 2024b. "Sins of the Father: Schenker, Schenkerism and Ewell's On Music Theory." *Music Analysis* 43: 136–174.

Parkhurst, Bryan, and Stephan Hammel. 2019. "Pitch, Tone, and Note." In *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Concepts in Music Theory*, edited by Alexander Rehding and Steven Rings, 3–39. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ridley, Aaron. 2003. "Against Musical Ontology." *The Journal of Philosophy* 100 (4): 203–220.

Schenker, Heinrich. 1933. "Handwritten Letter from Schenker to Cube." In *Schenker Documents Online*, edited by Ian Bent and William Drabkin. https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-7a_46.html.

Scherzinger, Martin. 2001. "Negotiating the Music-theory/African-music Nexus: a Political Critique of Ethnomusicological Anti-formalism and a Strategic Analysis of the Harmonic Patterning of the Shona Mbira Song Nyamaropa." *Perspectives of New Music* 39 (1): 5–117.

———. 2022. "In Defense of African Harmony." *Ghana Studies* 24: 91–98.

Shakespeare, William. n.d. "All's Well that Ends Well." From The Folger Shakespeare. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles, https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/alls-well-that-ends-well/read/.

Taruskin, Richard. 1989. "Reply to Brown and Dempster." *Journal of Music Theory* 33 (1): 155–164.

Temperley, David. 2006. "Review of *Music in the Galant Style*, by Robert O. Gjerdingen." *Journal of Music Theory* 50 (2): 277–290.

Tymoczko, Dmitri. 2013. "Review of *Music21: a Toolkit for Computer-aided Musicology*, by Michael Cuthbert." *Music Theory Online* 19 (3). https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.13.19.3/mto.13.19.3.tymoczko.html.

Walker, Jonathan. 2001. "Review of Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity, by Adam Krims." *Music Theory Online* 7 (4). https://www.mtosmt.org/classic/mto.01.7.4/mto.01.7.4.walker.html.

Young, James O. 2011. "The Ontology of Musical Works: A Philosophical Pseudo-Problem." *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 6 (2): 284–297.