

# NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF MUSIC THEORISTS

David Kopp (Boston University), President

Margaret Thomas (Connecticut College), Secretary

Edward Gollin (Williams College), Treasurer

TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING  
THE HART SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD  
WILDE AUDITORIUM, GRAY CONFERENCE CENTER  
APRIL 21-22, 2006

## *Program Abstracts*

### **Friday afternoon, April 21**

#### **Carolyn Mullin (Florida State University): Completely Incomplete: Rhythmic and Melodic Contour as a Means of Continuity in Webern's Unfinished Cello Sonata (1914)**

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

Despite this piece being unfinished, there is a complete and identifiable developmental process involving motivic variation of tetrachords. Four-note motives at the beginning of the piece are clear and salient segmentations, and then as the piece progresses, the motives become unfocused and less easily identified due to the different types of distortions applied to the motives.

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

#### **Edward Gollin (Williams College): On Some Relations Between Bartók's Comparative Musicology and Bartókian Analysis**

The paper explores some of the ways Bartók's work as a collector of southeast European folk music reveal modes of analytical thought and domains of musical structure that can inform the analysis of Bartók's original compositions. In particular, we shall examine how certain aspects of Bartók's lexical system for classifying and categorizing tunes—namely caesura tone scheme and metric/syllabic scheme—underlie the variation technique in the Ballade from *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs* (Sz. 71) and play a central role in the harmonic and formal design of "Song," No. 116 from *Mikrokosmos*.

#### **Denise Elshoff (Yale University): Twentieth-Century Tonality and Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 3, Mvt. 5**

Music theory has developed sophisticated analytic methods and theories for common-practice tonal (ca. 1700–1900) and non-tonal music, but it has not yet developed such refined tools for tonal music of the twentieth

century. I propose an approach grounded in the notion that scale types and their intervallic properties affect how intervals are contextually heard.

In scalar contexts, rare intervals play an important role in establishing tonal centers and hierarchies through a process that Browne (1981) terms, “position finding.” Scale-degree distinctiveness can play a similar position-finding role. Scale types, like the diatonic, that have both rare intervals and unique scale degrees are naturally (or systemically) more hierarchical than scale types, like the chromatic, that lack rare intervals and unique scale degrees. As a result, intervals tend to be heard *between* scale degrees in diatonic contexts but *within* pc-set aggregates in chromatic contexts. Twentieth-century tonal music, however, often undermines the hierarchical tendencies of the diatonic collection and the aggregate tendencies of chromatic collections.

The rondo theme from Shostakovich’s Third Quartet, Mvt. 5 will illustrate how a chromatic and harmonically non-functional theme may nevertheless assert a tonal center and scalar hierarchy through contextual factors. Unlike most themes of its kind, it features accented dissonances. My analysis will reveal how the rondo theme creates an ironic ambivalence between its centric F–C dyad and competing ic-5 dyads by counterbalancing devices that establish F-centricity with ones that weaken or undercut it. Structural and hermeneutic ramifications of these techniques will be considered.

### **Vasili Byros (Yale University): Tonal *oder* Atonal?: Interval Cycles, Whole-Tone Tonality, and the Dialectics of Musical Process in Berg’s Piano Sonata, Op. 1**

Previous accounts of Berg’s Piano Sonata, Op. 1, by Dave Headlam and Janet Schmalfeldt leave one with the impression that the work is not quite atonal, or is tonal in general, in the background sense, though plagued with deviant foreground materials. In either case, the Sonata acts as a kind of stepping-stone to Op. 2 no. 4, generally acknowledged as Berg’s first atonal composition. This paper investigates the problem of the Sonata as a transitional work, to argue that the work is neither tonal nor atonal in the universal sense, but rather is internally divided. This internal tension is realized through a staging, or critique, of tonality, rather than an application of it. Other non-tonal structures, namely, the whole-tone scale and its interaction with the chromatic scale and interval-cycles, subvert tonality at critical stages in the sonata process. Thereby tonality is itself made the object of reflection, rather than an applied musical language. What allows for this objectification is the work’s attempt to construct another system, defined here as a kind of “whole-tone tonality” based on interval cycles. Schoenberg’s own comments on the possibility of a whole-tone tonality – based on the interaction of the two whole-tone scales with the chromatic scale – in the *Harmonielehre* of 1911, as well as Adorno’s paradigm concerning the non-affirmative quality of modern art figure into the argument. Some of Headlam’s more critical ideas regarding the later, more properly, atonal works are also seen to apply to Op. 1.

### **Saturday morning, April 22**

### **Peter Franck (Eastman School of Music): A Fallacious Concept: The Role of Invertible Counterpoint within the *Ursatz***

This paper examines invertible counterpoint at the twelfth as a property of tonality. Schenker champions the teachings of Fux and C. P. E. Bach as exemplars of instruction in strict counterpoint and thoroughbass, but dismisses invertible counterpoint at the tenth and twelfth as “fallacious concepts.” Both Fux and C. P. E. Bach, however, cherish invertible counterpoint as a valuable compositional resource. These opposing sentiments toward invertible counterpoint establish the following paradox: Fux and Bach serve as upholders of a venerated musical tradition, but also as advocates of a “fallacious concept.” I address this paradox with three questions. First, where should one write invertible counterpoint at the twelfth within a composition, e.g., within a fugue? Second, does the presence of invertible counterpoint at the twelfth depend upon the structure of the fugue-subject? Third, is invertible counterpoint at the twelfth a technique that occurs at the surface or is it really a property of tonality? An analysis of J. S. Bach’s Fugue in C minor from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1 (BWV 847) helps to provide answers to these questions.

**Carissa Reddick (University of Connecticut): Avoiding Non-Tertian Sonorities in the Chromatic Voice Exchange: Contrapuntal Paradigms and Alterations**

Harmonizing a chromaticized voice exchange results in non-tertian sonorities if strict voice leading and contrapuntal motions are observed. The paper explores passages in the music of Berlioz, Wolf, Richard Strauss, and Wagner that reveal certain patterns of alterations from the strict paradigms to avoid such harsh sonorities. The two most common alterations involve combining two chords from the paradigm resulting in either oblique motion or diatonic steps in the exchanging voices, and substituting tones a half step away from the common tones in the non-exchanging voices. Comparing a reduction of the voice exchange from the score to its strict contrapuntal paradigm, a “reconstruction” of the voice exchange shows how composers alter sonorities from the paradigms to form tertian chords.

**Art Samplaski (Ithaca, New York): Towards a High-Cardinality Middleground**

Pitch-class set theory collapses high-cardinality chords into a handful of set-class types because it counts the interval-classes between all pitch-pairs in a chord—in particular, the 479 million ordered instances of the chromatic aggregate become a single set-class 12-1. This is far too drastic a reduction in the number of analytic categories, due to ignoring obvious affective differences between instances based on their spacing. I propose a compromise: for high-cardinality chords use only the intervals between adjacent pitches and build an analogue to the ic-vector, called an ACV, for “Adjacent-interval Class Vector.” This significantly reduces the number of categories while still permitting differentiation between distinct instances. An additional necessary level of indexing is provided by the idea of “pole chords,” which are those ACV categories with one ic-component maximized at the expense of all others. We can situate any chord instance of a particular cardinality in relation to that cardinality’s pole chords in an abstract space using existing atonal similarity measures. Together with information such as the relative frequency of an ACV category, we can non-trivially analyze passages involving high-cardinality chords. Examples from Lutoslawski’s music are discussed.

**Jerry Ianni (Laguardia Community College/CUNY): Visual Algebraic Models for Sets of Synthetic Musical Scales**

Ferruccio Busoni first introduced synthetic musical scales in 1907. In papers published in 1929 and in 1949, J. Murray Barbour worked towards a complete classification of scale patterns and an enumeration of all possible synthetic musical scales. In 1970, Robert M. Mason extended Barbour’s results using matrix algebra techniques. He also provided a complete catalogue of such scales. In this paper, I probe the algebraic structure of various collections of synthetic musical scales and scale fragments. Specifically, I show how to convert such collections into commutative bands (i.e., commutative semigroups wherein each element is an idempotent).

This result is compelling because every commutative band can be represented graphically through its associated Hasse diagram; and by making appropriate interpretations, these diagrams greatly inform voice-leading investigations. In particular, the diagrams provide compact visualization of semitonal movements. They enable immediate perception of some *downshift*, *upshift*, and other voice leadings identified by David Lewin. In addition, the principles used for constructing and interpreting associated Hasse diagrams dovetail with those used in recent work by Joseph N. Straus on the development of graphical models for set class space. A consequence of the algebraic theory is that commutative band structures exist on set class space.

**Saturday afternoon, April 22**

**Bruce Durazzi (Northwestern University): Chromatic Third Relations in Beethoven’s “Spring” Sonata: Implications for Form and Analysis**

The Adagio of Beethoven’s “Spring” Sonata for violin and piano, op. 24, includes a prominent cycle of modulations by major thirds. This feature of the movement has been cited as a precedent for later works that exploit equal divisions of the octave, but no published commentary has considered in detail how this unusual chromatic cycle interacts with the formal process of the movement or the work as a whole. The passage in question may be viewed in Schenkerian terms as a middleground bass arpeggiation, or in neo-Riemannian terms as a complete

hexatonic cycle within Cohn's "Southern System." Neither of these readings, however, fully captures the strangeness and particularity of this unusual event. Viewed in terms of its role in the form, the chromatic cycle appears to be much more disruptive than our ready theoretical models would suggest. By the end of the modulatory sequence, the movement's rondo structure has collapsed, and the final return to tonic is left without a corresponding return of the principal theme. Further consideration of the Adagio in relation to the other movements reveals that chromatic third relations are thematized in each of the four movements. After playing various transgressive roles in the first three movements, the destabilizing threat of chromatic mediant is finally brought under control in the final movement.

### **Graham Hunt (University of Texas at Arlington): David Lewin and Valhalla Revisited: Neo-Riemannian and Schenkerian Approaches to Motivic Corruption in Wagner's *Ring* Cycle**

In his 1992 essay "Some Notes on Analyzing Wagner," David Lewin examines connections between two motives in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, the Valhalla and Tarnhelm, through the lens of neo-Riemannian operations. His analysis reveals striking connections between the two musical ideas that have important dramatic implications, and provokes the idea that further analysis of this kind could penetrate deeper into the musical-dramatic fabric of Wagner's complex technique of motivic transformation. Lewin's methodology can be extended by considering not only other occurrences of the "distorted" Valhalla motive and other motives in the *Ring* cycle (such as the Tarnhelm and Magic Potion motives), but by broadening the analytic lens to include new neo-Riemannian relations involving non-consonant chords and considerations of the motives' Schenkerian contexts. I specifically propose a pluralistic analytical approach that takes Lewin's insights a step further and traces the process of motivic manipulation not only from a neo-Riemannian "transformation of transformations" perspective, but also from a Schenkerian reading of the motives' changing diatonic contexts. The transformational graphs used throughout the paper integrate the findings from the two different analytic approaches and contextualize appearances of the motives in "diatonic zones" and "chromatic zones." Particular emphasis is given to Siegfried and Brünnhilde's scene in Act I, Scene 3 of *Götterdämmerung* and its employment of rotational form.

### **Ira Braus (The Hartt School, University of Hartford): Brahms Recomposes *Tristan*: Metamorphosis and Anamorphosis**

In 1876 Brahms declared to the singer, George Henschel, "If I look at the score of *Tristan* in the morning, I'm cross for the rest of the day." This statement, the most familiar of several he made about the opera, has diverted scholarly attention from an important question: Why is it that he references *Tristan* more than any other Wagner opera in his compositions?

This paper will focus on two *Tristan*-inspired works of especial analytical interest, the song, *Mein wundes Herz*, op.59, no.7, and the piano piece, *Intermezzo in C-sharp minor*, op.117, no.3. In these works, Brahms creatively addresses two music theoretical issues germane to the opera: (1) the "function" of the *Tristan* chord, and (2) the contrapuntal displacements of its associated leitmotifs. *Mein wundes Herz* metamorphoses the *Tristan* chord and its "resolution" into a single Dominant function by reordering its leitmotifs and extracting from them directed harmonic progressions. The *Intermezzo*, in contrast, metamorphoses the same chord into dominant-function diminished sevenths while *anamorphosing* both harmony and leitmotiv. *Anamorphosis* is used here to mean the camouflaging of musical ideas (*Gestalten*) through temporal and registral diffusion.

Among other things, this paper will hypothesize a rationale for Brahms's ambivalence towards *Tristan* and how such feeling mirrored his composerly evolution. Clearly, the *Tristan* works show that he was more receptive to the music of the New German School than is generally believed and that such works foretell similar essays in "absolute music" by Reger and composers of the Second Vienna School.