

# NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF MUSIC THEORISTS

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**TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING  
THE NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE OF MUSIC THEORISTS  
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY  
APRIL 15-16, 2011**

*Abstracts*

**Friday afternoon, April 15**

**1:30 pm – 3:30 pm**

***The Composer's Workshop: Materials and Processes***

- Reading, Interpreting, Translating: Three Transcriptions of a Bach Chorale  
Ian Bates (University of Western Ontario)

Many scholars have argued that the act of performance, as a “reading” of a musical text, can serve as a form of analysis. This paper argues that the act of transcribing a musical text for a different group of instruments also constitutes a “reading,” and that both processes of translation will inevitably shed light on certain features of a work while obscuring others. To illustrate, the paper considers transcriptions of Bach’s chorale “*Wachet auf*” by Leopold Stokowski, Sir Granville Bantock, and Ottorino Respighi, and demonstrates that these translations represent three very different readings and interpretations of Bach’s text which collectively shed light on the work’s meaning.

Each transcription proposes a different reading of the relationship between Nicolai’s tune and Bach’s setting. Stokowski casts Bach’s contrapuntal setting as an ornamentation of Nicolai’s original chorale melody, which he regards as the work’s centerpiece; Bantock treats the chorale melody as merely a foundation upon which to build a new musical edifice, adding his own newly composed counterpoint to Bach’s setting; and Respighi undertakes a more holistic reading of the work, acknowledging both Nicolai’s and Bach’s contributions while focusing on Bach’s setting as a whole. These three transcribers also illuminate different aspects of the work’s form. Whereas Bantock and Respighi adhere to the bipartite form of Bach’s setting, albeit with subtle and compelling modifications by Respighi, Stokowski reveals a latent tripartite form; by omitting the repeat of the opening A section, he proposes a minor-mode B section followed by a modified recapitulation.

- Stravinsky's Compositional Process: Revelations From a Sketch Study  
Táhirih Motazedian (University of Arizona)

Compositional sketches grant us a rare and intimate look inside a composer’s mind, and divulge fascinating insights into the composer’s intentions and compositional methods. As Carr, Horlacher, Rogers, Smyth, and others have shown, Stravinsky’s sketches are fertile grounds for exploration. His *Serenade en La* is an ideal piece for sketch study because of the wealth of sketches available, which have not yet been formally analyzed and discussed. Over 60 pages of sketches (transcribed from the collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, Switzerland) have been examined for this study. By doing a measure-for-measure comparison of the *Serenade*’s sketches with the final published version, I have analyzed the changes that occurred

throughout the evolution of the piece. These changes align themselves in an evident trend that reveals an intriguing implication about Stravinsky's compositional process.

I will demonstrate that Stravinsky initially conceived his *Serenade* with more traditional tonal elements, and later amended his ideas with the deliberate intent of deviating from customary practice. His *Serenade* sketches contain abundant instances where he altered chord members to obscure standard harmonies, scrambled voice-leading to confound harmonic progressions, and tampered with sequences to evade predictable patterns.

Stravinsky was an avid proponent of emancipation from the constraints of Western music. After having traced the evolution of the *Serenade*, I conclude that he consciously worked toward this goal, rather than doing so based solely on his intrinsic creative instinct.

- *Gegenstrebig Harmonik* in the Music of Hans Zender  
Robert Hasegawa (Eastman School of Music)

Hans Zender's concept of *gegenstrebig Harmonik* is inspired by Heraclitus's fragment 51: "They do not understand how that which differs with itself is in agreement: harmony consists of opposing tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre." The "opposing tensions" of Zender's harmony arise between two essentially different ways of conceiving intervals between pitches. We can understand an interval as a distance, measured in terms of equal-tempered divisions of the octave, but also as an acoustical quality, defined by the ratio between its frequencies. Thinking in terms of tempered intervals emphasizes abstract geometries (as in pitch-class set theory), while thinking in terms of frequencies draws our attention to an interval's sonic qualities (for example, the acoustically pure consonances of just intonation). For Zender, both ways of thinking are important—his compositional method combines temperament (a division of the octave into seventy-two equal steps) with harmonic structures conceived as pure frequency ratios. One of Zender's most characteristic harmonic procedures is the construction of harmonies based on the sum and difference of an interval's frequencies—he compares this technique to the effect of a ring modulator in electronic music. This paper analyzes two recent works, *Music to Hear* (1999) and *Bardo* (1999-2000), using concepts derived from Zender's own theories. In these works, genealogies of pitch relationships organize Zender's microtonal pitch material into rich networks of harmonic interconnections.

**3:45 pm – 5:15 pm**

### *Extending Tonality*

- A Voicing-Centered Approach to Additive Harmony in the French Repertoire of *La Belle Époque*  
Damian Blättler (Yale University)

This paper presents a voicing-centered model of chord structure and function for additive harmonic structures in the music of the French *Belle Époque*. In giving voicing a foundational role, the model corrects the widely acknowledged but as-of-yet-unaddressed inability of the conventional extended-triad model to (a) explain how chords are constructed and (b) describe how those pitch combinations function in context. This project also enriches the narrative of the development of Western tonal language in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most research on this process details how innovation within certain horizontal-domain constraints allowed for the incorporation into tonal contexts of new harmonic successions; this paper demonstrates that a similar process can be read in the vertical domain, wherein adherence to certain *vertical*-domain constraints (e.g. skeletal chord voicings derived from common-practice chords, and generalized principles of consonant, "chordable" pitch combination) allowed for the incorporation into tonal contexts of new *chords*.

This model consists of two parts. The first part concerns chord construction, and draws on music cognition research and several set-theoretical mechanisms to formulate a list of

constraints on voicing; this list pares down the entire set of possible pitch-space chords into a set congruent with the range of verticalities found in the repertoire. The second part describes the “tonal plausibilities” of that set of verticalities—the ways in which skeletal portions of chords allow novel pitch formations to access common-practice listening habits. Analytic examples are taken from the music of Chabrier, Debussy, Koechlin, Ravel, and Satie.

- Contour-Defined Tonality in Schoenberg's Third String Quartet, Opus 30  
Mustafa Bor (University of Alberta)

Tonality in Schoenberg’s serial music has been discussed from a variety of perspectives, including meter and phrase-level structure (Benjamin 2000), rhythm and overlapping segments (Cherlin 1993), musical closure and interaction of conflicting keys (Kurth 2000), and memory and voice leading (Cherlin 1998). However, contour has not been explored to its fullest potential, considering it is one of the key concepts for understanding non-serial aspects of pitch organization, and therefore holds the potential to unveil tonal associations in Schoenberg’s music.

This paper presents an analysis of the *Hauptstimmen* in the first movement of Schoenberg’s Third String Quartet. The twelve *Hauptstimmen* are hierarchized based on their contour characteristics by using the *window algorithms*. The analysis demonstrates how contour reductions highlight a clear focus on certain pitches, in contrast with the more even distribution of the serial surface level, and reveal tonal residues, which are further supported by the formal design of the movement.

### **Saturday morning, April 16**

**9:00 am – 10:20 am**

### ***Interpreting Harmony and Tone in Folk/Pop Music***

- ‘A Better Way to Go’: Enharmonicism in Fiona Apple's “Extraordinary Machine”  
Haley Beverburg Reale (University of Michigan)

Fiona Apple’s song “Extraordinary Machine,” from the 2005 album with the same title, charms listeners with playful timbres created by bells, woodwinds, and *pizzicato* strings, an “oom-pah” feel, and the vocalist’s graceful, seemingly effortless sliding and use of “blue notes.” In contrast, the lyrics have a much more serious tone, reflecting how the singer will overcome adversity, even though she feels underestimated by those around her. This same clash between playfulness and seriousness can be found in harmonic aspects of the song, as well; the lighthearted exterior masks the complexity and ambiguity that arise through mixture, enharmonic spelling issues, and remote modulations. Therefore, despite its outward appearance of simplicity, “Extraordinary Machine” warrants a close examination through the lens of chromatic tonal theory.

In this paper, I will trace a series of enharmonic events that coincide with pivotal formal and lyrical moments in the song. I will argue that these events set up the song’s highpoint that takes place at the end of the bridge. At this point, as she sings the words “everything will be just fine” while gracefully sliding and sounding nonchalant, she makes a remote modulation and an enharmonic shift seamless and almost imperceptible through her manner of performing a pitch that has been set up to be enharmonically paradoxical (C-natural/B-sharp). My analysis of this popular song reveals an underlying harmonic narrative which enriches the understanding of the performance and the story unfolding in the lyrics.

- Mode, Harmony, and Dissonance Treatment in American Folk and Popular Music, c. 1920-1945  
Nicholas Stoa (Boston, MA)

In American folk and popular music, dissonance frequently functions in ways that cannot be explained by conventional tonal theory. Two types of dissonance—dropping and hanging thirds—function outside of classical norms, and within the framework of a mode built around the tonic triad. They lie most frequently around  $\check{A}$  and also around  $\check{C}$ . The mode either transposes or remains in place during changes of harmony. When it transposes to IV or V—the most common non-tonic harmonies—the root and fifth of those harmonies may have dropping and hanging thirds. When the mode remains in place, a shift to non-tonic harmony renders certain members of the tonic triad temporarily unstable. Over IV,  $\check{C}$  and  $\check{A}$  are temporarily unstable, and their tendency in this context is to resolve to  $\check{A}$ . Over V, only  $\check{C}$  remains stable, but the tendency of  $\check{A}$  and  $\check{A}$  is not to resolve to  $\check{C}$ , but rather to  $\check{A}$  over tonic harmony. Thus, when the tonic mode remains over V, melodic resolution requires a shift back to I. The interaction between the mode and harmony influences the large-scale structure of a strophe or other section and the perception of its tension and resolution. When the mode transposes, dissonance derives mostly from shifts to non-tonic harmonies, which create large-scale harmonic dissonance with tonic harmony; when the tonic mode remains in place, further dissonance derives from the interaction between the tonic mode and the non-tonic harmonies, creating more compulsion to resolve.

**10:30 am – 12:00 pm**

### *Schemas*

- A Ravi Shankar Performance: Cadential Formulas, Developmental Techniques, and Static Episodes  
Christopher Matthey (Princeton University)

This paper explores three aspects of a medium-tempo Ravi Shankar performance of *raag Yaman* (Oriental Records, 1986): generative relations among cadential formulas, developmental techniques in episodes of improvisation, and static episodes. The performance realizes an aesthetic of variation and rhythmic play manifest throughout Ravi Shankar's recorded output. I begin by introducing the *taal* (rhythmic/metric cycle) and *raag* (melodic type) in which the performance is set. I then show that many of the cadence formulas (*tihais*) of the performance draw on the same pool of melodic ideas, and that cadences from disparate moments of the performance are related by addition or multiplication. The improvised episodes of the performance fall into two groups: development-oriented episodes and what I shall call "static episodes." Processes used in the former group include liquidation, thinning, grouping reduction, front-loading, and rhythmic augmentation. In static episodes all musical parameters except one are held invariant. The paper does not presuppose familiarity with North Indian Classical music or the terminology commonly used in describing it.

- Galant Recitative Schemas  
Matthew Boyle (Indiana University) and Paul Sherrill (Indiana University)

Robert Gjerdingen's *Music in the Galant Style* argues that much instrumental music of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was constructed by chaining together conventional voice-leading formulas, or phrase schemas. In this paper, we demonstrate that the century's Italian-language recitative can be understood similarly. We identify approximately twenty schemas that comprise most of the century's recitative, by composers as early as Leonardo Vinci and as late as Mozart.

A recitative schema's melodic pattern is its primary defining trait. Subsidiary features include a harmonic context (usually no more than two harmonies) and a set of rhythmic and metric features. Most schemas include one or more pitches that may be repeated rapidly and freely to set numerous syllables of text. Other pitches are generally not repeated but serve as

metric anchors, falling only on relatively strong beats. Recitative schemas also have specific formal functions (e.g. as phrase initiations, continuations, interruptions, cadences, and so on), and some schemas strongly imply continuation by specific other schemas.

This schema-theoretic approach to recitative suggests new lines of questioning regarding the style. For example, one might study the relative prevalence of the schemas to characterize stylistic differences. The presence or absence of schemas also allows one to distinguish subtle gradations between recitative and more songlike style (such as *arioso*). Knowledge of the schemas' conventional formal implications can highlight instances of wit or compositional play. Recitative schemas might be studied for extra-musical meanings as well, by investigating whether schemas are consistently paired with the contents of the words they set.

### **Saturday afternoon, April 16**

**1:15 pm – 2:45 pm**

#### ***Panel Discussion: Heroes, Villains, and Theorists: Approaches to Opera Analysis***

- Deborah Burton (Boston University)
- William Rothstein (Graduate Center, CUNY)
- Peter Westergaard (Princeton University)
- Matthew Shaftel (Florida State University)

**3:00 pm – 4:30 pm**

#### ***Transformation and Musical Space***

- Nonatonicism in the Pitch Structure of Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony  
Cameron Logan (University of Connecticut)

Attempts to analyze the Fourth Symphony of Ralph Vaughan Williams often follow a method proposed by the composer himself. In his program note, Vaughan Williams describes the two main motives which open the symphony and then points out the transformations and recurrences of these motives throughout the four movements. Lionel Pike successfully applies that method of close motivic analysis into a unified view of the symphony. In particular, Pike shows how the first motive projects a long-range scheme of pitch centrality and how a union of the Lydian and Phrygian mode explains much of the pitch materials. While the use of modal elements is certainly familiar in the music of Vaughan Williams, a growing number of scholars suggest that the octatonic collection plays an important role in structuring the composer's modernist works. Walter Aaron Clark, Anthony Barone, and David Manning have all shown or suggested that octatonicism structures the harmonic language of this segment of the output.

This paper explores the possibility that pitch organization in the modernist music of Vaughan Williams may be better explained by utilizing a symmetrical scale far less familiar than the octatonic. The scale is set-class 9-12, the nonatonic scale. After discussing its peculiar structure, the paper demonstrates how the harmonic constructions and tonal scheme of the Fourth Symphony can be understood in the context of nonatonic systems.

- Towards a Hermeneutics of Transformation (through Film Music)  
Frank Lehman (Harvard University)

For contemporary film music, the frequent recourse to triadic chromaticism and dynamic relation with narrative naturally suggests the adoption of a transformational analytic stance. However, at present we lack a consistent methodology for analyzing spans of film music longer than one or two emblematic chord progressions, far less guidelines for *interpreting* a filmic text

by way of transformational analysis. My aim is to present the beginnings of a transformational hermeneutics developed specifically out of this repertoire.

Neo-Riemannian techniques enable us to track the vagaries of tonal space with a cue, locating its harmonic pressure points and tendons, their correspondence with events onscreen, and ramifications across the score. However, some of the priorities of transformation theory as it has been applied to art music require recalibration in order to accurately reflect scoring practice. In particular, dualistic isographies and complex group structures are the exception in this more contingent and hurried repertoire. With some adjustments and expansions, transformational analytic techniques can be configured to shine not only descriptive, but fully interpretive light on the music of this oft-heard but under-studied repertoire. To this end, I offer mini-analyses of several scores out of this harmonic practice, including *A Sixth Sense*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Indiana Jones*, and *Spiderman*. These cases not only sharpen our understanding of their particular films, but suggest a way in which some of the recurrent issues of transformation theory—compound vs. unary transformations, figural vs. formal description, cycles and teleology, and symmetry—are sources for hermeneutic richness in their own right.

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