

James M. Baker, David W. Beach, and Jonathan Bernard, eds. *Music Theory in Concept and Practice*. University of Rochester Press, 1997. 529 pp.

Reviewed by Marilyn Nonken

Music Theory In Concept and Practice is a seventieth-birthday tribute to Allen Forte, a theorist of unprecedented influence. Its editors claim that "in the modern rise of music theory . . . no single individual has been more central" (6). If this is an exaggeration, it is only a slight one. In addition to authoring landmark works (including *Tonal Theory in Concept and Practice* and *The Structure of Atonal Music*), Forte has also been an active and motivating presence in the field: as the editor who ushered the *Journal of Music Theory* through its transition from a fledgling publication to one of prominence; as a catalyst behind the foundation of the Society for Music Theory; and as a guiding force whose efforts resulted in the establishment of the doctoral program in music theory at Yale, the first of its kind at a major American institution. As depicted by Jonathan Bernard in the first of nineteen essays in this collection, Forte stands as heir to a tradition of musical inquiry that extends to the earliest decades of the century. With contributions by scholars on a wide variety of topics, this volume cannily evidences the transforming effect of one scholar's work on the discipline.

Music Theory in Concept and Practice is divided into two broad categories ("Historical and Theoretical Essays" and "Analytical Studies"), then further divided into four subsections. The essays are categorized according to their musicological orientation ("Historical Perspectives" and "Theoretical Perspectives"), and the analyses to the repertoire they treat ("The Tonal Repertoire" and "Twentieth-Century Music"). The reader is warned that these divisions are by no means airtight. Works treating twentieth-century music, for example, are commonly found in other sections. Robert Morris's analysis of Varèse's *Octandre* is located in "Theoretical Perspectives," while Arnold Whittall's study on Carter and Birtwistle is found in "Historical Perspectives." The analyses are rarely lacking historical and theoretical comment, nor are the predominantly historical essays lacking analytical components. To their advantage, many essays in this collection ignore these distinctions. The best of them attain the fusion of historical, theoretical, and analytical thought, providing the reader a richer understanding of history, a firmer grasp of some of the issues surrounding music composition and scholarship, and an enlightened conception of the notes on the page. Because several studies will thus be of interest to historical

musicologists as well as theorists, contributions will be summarized and critiqued individually.

One article that straddles theory and history with unique aplomb is William Rothstein's "The Form of Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasy*." Rothstein focuses on the curious construction of Chopin's op. 61, a work that has recently seen an "explosion" of interest (337). Retracing the steps of previous analysts, Rothstein considers conflicting interpretations, which range from ternary and strophic readings to elaborations of sonata-allegro form. Gradually, he presents a detailed original analysis that, through the identification of grouping structures, harmonic motions, and motivic connections, suggests "the expansion of simple song forms . . . into a relatively vast and certainly imposing structure" (359). The analysis is convincing, and the study is distinguished by Rothstein's dynamic view of form. Never depicted as a preconceived construct into which the composer simply funnels his materials, form is portrayed as emerging gradually from the interaction between the musical materials (as assembled by the composer) and their relationships (as heard). Through perceptive analysis of the *Fantasy*, op. 49, and *Polonaise*, op. 53, Rothstein reveals how Chopin reworked ideas from earlier pieces in op. 61. "The Form of Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasy*" provides a multidimensional view of the latter's form not simply as recreated through contemporary analytical techniques, but as having evolved in the course of Chopin's compositional development.

The success of "The Form of Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasy*" stems not only from the strength of Rothstein's ideas but his gift for explanation. His style is typified by ready references and apt examples. Contemporary theories of semiotics and narrativity are invoked with the same ease that Schenker and Schachter are cited, and musical examples from Beethoven to the Beatles, summoned with an uncanny knack and utter lack of self-consciousness, always refine, rather than obscure, the larger points. Further, his illustrations offer a wealth of information in an accessible, readable manner. His durational reduction, for instance, delineates the quatrains form, identifies smaller phrase constructs, provides a harmonic and hypermetric analysis, and supports numerous points regarding enharmonic spellings, bass motion, and modal mixture. His Schenkerian-style reductions not only chart the progression of specific scale degrees but also incorporate roman numeral analysis and descriptions of phrase structure. Elsewhere in this collection, David Neumeier reminds the reader that "it is usually easier to locate patterns of tonal relations than it is to prove that they are significant" (216). Through concise prose and elegantly constructed examples, Rothstein makes the significance of his findings remarkably clear.

Similarly providing a potent mix of historical and analytical insight is

James Baker's "Scriabin's Music: Structure as Prism for Mystical Philosophy." Baker takes as his point of departure the crisis of identity suffered by artists in fin-de-siècle Russia, and a large part of the article is devoted to the evolution of Scriabin's legendary, poetic persona. While he never entirely dispels the image of Scriabin as a delusional megalomaniac, Baker makes a solid case for him as a child of his time, vividly documenting the composer's interests in Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche; the influences of the Russian Symbolist and Theosophical movements on the development of his personal philosophy; and the interaction of artists and intellectuals in the Silver Age. Musical analysis then demonstrates how Scriabin's mystical and philosophical convictions may have manifested themselves in the structural design of his works. For example, the tonal and whole-tone components of the *Poème fantasque*, op. 45, no. 2, are shown to correspond to the interpenetrating planes of existence discussed in Theosophy. Commenting on the *Prelude*, op. 59, no. 2, Baker notes that its structure has the geometric proportions of a crystal, which may have possessed special ramifications for Scriabin in its perfect reflection of Theosophical cosmic principles. Several works are described as moving through states of languor, longing, impetuous striving, dance, ecstasy, and transfiguration, states that mirror the spiritual progress of the soul "towards ecstatic union with the Divine Principal" (80). Taken out of context, this may sound sensational. Even in context, the reader may suffer the occasional cracked smile, unaccustomed to the impassioned exhortations of a bygone era. ("I am God!" announces Scriabin in his diary. "I am fire enveloping the universe/Reducing it to chaos") (61). What makes this essay unusually effective, however, is the author's intimate knowledge of his subject, which is conveyed with unswerving seriousness and lucidity.

In Robert Wason's "Signposts on Webern's Path to Atonality: The *Dehmel Lieder* (1906-08)," analysis is again offered in a compelling historical context. Posthumously published, these five songs date from a little-documented period of Webern's creative evolution, the transition to atonality, which directly preceded his landmark *Fünf Stücke*, op. 5. Emphasizing the volatility of the composer's compositional development, Wason seeks to show that the songs "move gradually along a continuum between 'tonality' and 'atonality'—not necessarily linearly nor without regression" (311). To this end, different analytical approaches are summoned to capture the wavering tonal and atonal dimensions of the *Lieder*, which are stylistically diverse, and vary in their dependence on tonal convention. In songs in which the tonal residue is thick, Wason suggests how referential sonorities function as tonic and dominant, evoking "keys" in otherwise atonal environments. In the analysis of songs in which the tonal pull is weaker, the consideration of pitch-class sets, motive, contour, and text-setting takes

precedence. "Signposts on Webern's Path to Atonality" enables us to see how Webern's increasing reliance on referential sonorities and motivic shapes led him to abandon traditional harmonic formulae. Wason also includes thoughtful speculation regarding the ordering of the songs and the reasons they were withheld from publication.

Like the *Dehmel Lieder*, Liszt's *Blume und Duft* also breaks with convention. In "Chasing the Scent: The Tonality of Liszt's *Blume und Duft*," Robert Morgan outlines the contradictions presented by this song, which is locally triadic but resists standard tonal interpretation on a global level. Morgan takes issue with Forte's 1987 exploration of *Blume und Duft*, which focused on its octatonic elements and suggested that its pervasive dominant-seventh sonorities had "no functional role within a tonality, explicit or implied." In an attempt to provide an alternative to Forte's interpretation, Morgan offers tonal hearings that alternately identify a centricity around $A\flat$, F, and $D\flat$ major. It is fascinating to follow him through these various interpretations; however, Morgan is unable to present a tonal reading that shows how any tonality, explicit or implied, provides harmonic function within the work. In reference to his interpretations, he admits that "neither reading does justice to—nor is indeed fully consistent with—critical features of the composition," deeming them "valid, if only to a degree" (371). Is the assertion that *Blume und Duft* is "still (somehow) tonal" (376) really more compelling than Forte's depiction of the song as (somehow) octatonic? Morgan concludes by celebrating the song's tonal uncertainty, claiming that the harmonically ambiguous setting is a perfect reflection of the text. Few will argue with this unobjectionable point, although other authors in this collection treat the conflict inherent in many post-tonal works with greater sensitivity.

One of *Music Theory in Concept and Practice's* strengths is its wealth of articles exploring the twentieth-century repertoire. Notable (and engagingly written) is Daniel Harrison's "Bitonality, Pentatonicism, and Diatonicism in a Work by Milhaud." Harrison's gamble—to use a piece "neither intended nor received as an important intellectual achievement in the twentieth century" (393) to exemplify sophisticated compositional procedures—succeeds. His analysis of Milhaud's *Second Chamber Symphony* and astute commentary illuminate how its bitonal environment is established and maintained, even when Milhaud encounters certain "problems" in composition. Ann McNamee's "Elision and Structural Levels in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Dark Angels*" is a more workman-like exploration of text-setting, motivic recurrence, and hierarchical structure, but a welcome study of a work this author was pleased to discover. Also gratifying is David Lewin's "Some Notes on *Pierrot Lunaire*," which takes as its point of departure Forte's analysis of the same material. Lewin's elegant analysis details

intricacies of pitch, rhythm, instrumentation, and text, and posits the interrelationships between them. While Lewin's analysis considers only the work's first eleven measures, it does so with rewarding thoroughness.

Robert Morris's "K, Kh, and Beyond" presents an alternative to Lewin's transformational approach. Morris seeks to reassert the usefulness of the relatively obscure K/Kh methodology introduced by Forte in the mid-1960s. In the present climate, K and Kh relations (relations between the set-class complexes, characteristic of a work's harmonic environment and its partitions) are generally viewed as dated analytical tools. "No doubt they are associated with the music theory of the 1960's and 1970's," writes Morris, "which tended toward more global, totalizing accounts of music" (275). However, as Morris presents theoretic extensions of the K and Kh relations and suggests their analytic applications, a strong case is made for the relevance of these tools to the contemporary analysis of the post-tonal repertoire. Compilation and comparison of the set-class lists (SC-lists) for Varèse's *Octandre*, Bartok's "From the Island of Bali" (from *Mikrokosmos*), and Webern's Five Movements for String Quartet, op. 5, demonstrate how this methodology provides a way to analyze and generalize about the harmonic environments of different structures, pieces, and musical contexts. Admittedly, this article may be the least accessible in *Music Theory in Concept and Practice*, due to its use of symbolic language and specialized terminology. Before reading "K, Kh, and Beyond," the reader unfamiliar with theories regarding KI, K, and Kh relations may find it helpful to review writings on the subject, such as Forte's *The Structure of Atonal Music* (1973) or Morris's *Composition with Pitch-Classes* (1987).

In addition, two essays on Schoenberg are offered by Patricia Carpenter and Christopher Hasty. Hasty's "Form and Idea in Schoenberg's *Fantasy*" is the more provocative. In response to Schoenberg's aesthetic writings, with which he largely concurs, Hasty argues that form is "nothing apart from the emerging particularity of events and their particular emotive characters" (479). His analytical approach is offered to counter those that treat content, expression, and form independently, and his motivic analysis illustrates a hearing in which formal function is directly tied to expressive character. Perhaps the problems of description that often plague these kinds of investigations, which are fraught with terminological, methodological, and conceptual difficulties, cannot be avoided. Yet if Hasty fails to persuade, his essay is refreshing for its risky attempt to reveal something that seems intuitively correct: that perceptions of changing musical character contribute to our perception of form—that "character, however we might wish to describe it, is not separate from, not other than, its 'formal' . . . function" (477). Judgments of novelty, expressivity, and beauty will remain controversial, as will any author who evokes them in support of a

structural analysis. Readers are encouraged to follow Hasty into this challenging territory, if only to visit a realm we are often discouraged from entering.

In contrast, Carpenter's "Tonality: A Conflict of Forces" is an unusually uncritical presentation of Schoenberg's thought. At the outset, the author announces, "I shall not assume some 'real' tonality, but rather suspending the question of whether his concept of tonality is 'correct,' adequate to what tonality 'really' is, I shall emphasize its character as an individual thought" (98). While Schoenberg's ideas are of interest in the context of his work and its significance, one must admit that "tonality is conflict" is not a particularly novel thought, nor one that has been neglected in the theoretical literature of the twentieth century. Most of the ideas detailed in this essay—the concept of pitch space, for example, and issues of unity, balance, and coherence—have been and continue to be pursued by other musical thinkers. Schoenberg's influence is nowhere in dispute, nor are his ideas languishing. Consequently, the need for such an exposé is unclear. Carpenter struggles to convey how the composer agonized to formalize his ideas, as if it were possible, through extensive citation, to let the reader vicariously experience his search for inward harmony. Her efforts might seem more valiant were the materials she draws upon, such as *Style and Idea*, *Structural Functions of Harmony*, and *Harmonielehre*, not widely available.

Arnold Whittall's "Modernist Aesthetics, Modernist Music: Some Analytical Perspectives" offers more hearty fare. Whittall aggressively targets David Schiff, the biographer of Elliott Carter, among those who have suggested that an inherent unity or synthesis underlies the fragmentation characteristic of many twentieth-century aesthetics. Countering this stance, Whittall instead suggests that "modernist art at its most interesting and successful is . . . an expression of the special and unprecedented tension between the attempt to embody fragmentation and the impulse to transcend it" (158). To underscore this point, he offers analyses that examine the role and possible meaning of diverging elements in works of Carter and Birtwistle. Exploring Carter's *Enchanted Preludes*, for example, Whittall adeptly shows how the work may be seen as embodying not a progression from separation to synthesis but rather "a sequence . . . which presents the similarity/difference dialog from ever-changing angles, and with different emphases" (168). Focus on Birtwistle's work leads him to assert that this is not "the kind of linear music that requires globally functioning goal-directedness . . . in which 'contradictions and ambiguities' are subsumed into a higher unity" (170). What is genuinely refreshing about his argument is that it does more than simply identify conflict as characteristic of contemporary composition. He does not simply raise differences as irrec-

oncible but convincingly shows how fragmentation functions as a vital part of the aesthetic. Considering this attractive alternative to synthesis-based approaches, the reader may similarly conclude that unity is more a matter of balance than synthesis in these modern works.

Pieter van den Toorn also explores the presence of conflict in "Neo-Classicism and Its Definitions," an analytical and philosophical essay that revolves around Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*. Neo-classical works such as the *Symphony*, stylistic hybrids exhibiting elements of tonal and atonal import, offer a unique challenge to theorists. With an eye toward the analysis of this repertoire, van den Toorn poses sharply drawn questions regarding extant analytical approaches and their limitations. How accurate or satisfying are tonal readings of the *Symphony*, such as Salzer's, and are the tonal elements they privilege structurally "legitimate"? Conversely, what are the merits of a set-theoretical analysis, which may not acknowledge the tonal implications of certain features? How successfully can motivic analysis reveal what is unique to one composer's style—can it distinguish Stravinsky's, for example, from Schoenberg's? Finally, what is the value of an analytical approach specific enough to embrace the substantial conflicts posed by the *Symphony*? These questions pertain to all analytical inquiries, not only those involving the neo-classical repertoire. When van den Toorn's analysis brings him to describe Stravinsky's symphony as one in which "a high degree of conflict coexists with one of transcendence" (153), he echoes Whittall in both wording and sentiment; indeed, these two essays are elegant complements. While Whittall offers a vision of how fragmentation may function within an aesthetic, van den Toorn suggests its important role in analysis.

An article uneasily paired with van den Toorn's is Joseph Straus's "Voice Leading in Atonal Music." Featuring analyses drawn from Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*, this essay supplements the author's already significant contribution to the discourse on atonal prolongation. Musical excerpts from Schoenberg, Webern, Scriabin, Roslavetz, and Crawford are also summoned to elaborate on his previously introduced voice-leading model. Straus posits linear connections between musical objects, then suggests how they may be interpreted as transpositionally and inversionally related. He acknowledges his debt to Forte and Lewin, and his model is aptly described as "set theory with a transformational attitude" (244). Schenker is the third primary influence behind his voice-leading model, which leads to multi-level representations of structure.

In many ways, Straus's analyses seem incomplete. He rarely indicates, for example, why one voice-leading interpretation might be preferable to another, in terms of its relation to perceived structure or compositional

design. He describes his analyses as hierarchical in only a "casual" sense, yet this deserves more comment than it receives. Furthermore, his analyses routinely ignore notes that do not coincide with the transformational networks being traced; while Straus admits this, he maintains that those notes belong to other transformational networks, all of which collectively contribute to the fabric of the composition as a whole. "We must content ourselves with describing the multiple voice leadings (plural)," he asserts, "knowing that for each transformational path we traverse, there will be others that run alongside or intersect it, each with its own points of interest" (259). Despite his grand rhetoric ("the time has come to embrace the multiplicity and diversity of atonal music, to accept the tensions and discontinuities . . .") (273), the reader is being asked to accept an essentially undesirable partiality as a unique strength of transformational analysis. Ultimately, Straus cannot explain away the sense of arbitrariness, one that is nowhere in evidence in Lewin's transformational analysis of *Pierrot*. This reader recalls van den Toorn's warning to those who "adopt relations of an increasingly abstract nature precisely to override conflict," noting that "given a sufficient degree of abstraction, all parts can be made to relate" (133).

Straus's article is only one of many contemporary extensions of Schenkerian theory offered by *Music Theory in Concept and Practice*. Another is David Neumeyer's provocative "Synthesis and Association, Structure and Design in Multi-Movement Compositions," which examines voice-leading and harmonic associations between movements and debates their relevance to structural analysis. Building on Schenker's work and responding to contributions by Schachter, McCreless, Lewis, and Kaminsky, Neumeyer delves into the issues surrounding the nature of musical autonomy. As he considers the conditions under which parallels between movements may be interpreted as bearers of form, it becomes clear that these knotty issues are not exclusively relevant to Schenkerian studies. How should analysis reflect the differences among a Baroque dance suite, the "Waldstein" sonata, *Dichterliebe*, and *Rosenkavalier*? In answer to this question, Neumeyer establishes a continuum recognizing differing degrees of structural autonomy and presents a model that offers a plausible framework for the analysis of song cycles, symphonies, film music, and opera. His model does not address stylistic and aesthetic concerns other than those he mysteriously refers to as "the obvious ones of sensitivity to historical context and of adherence to what may be called musical common sense" (207). However, his essay skillfully outlines some of the important issues at play.

David Beach and John Rothgeb present more straightforward Schenkerian studies. Beach's "The Submediant as Third Divider: Its Representation

at *Different Structural Levels*” provides an in-depth look at the common progression, I–vi–IV–V–I, offering several examples in which the role of the submediant may be interpreted as potentially ambiguous. This essay stands as a striking antithesis to Harrison’s “Bitonality, Pentatonicism, and Diatonicism in a Work by Milhaud.” While Harrison exploits an arguably second-rate symphony to illustrate surprisingly sophisticated compositional practices, Beach uses renowned works of Haydn, Schubert, Beethoven, and Bach to illustrate a progression that generally “is perfectly straightforward and thus requires no special comment” (309). Whether one is convinced by Beach’s argument will depend largely on one’s fascination with the submediant. For entirely different reasons, this reader grew impatient with Rothgeb’s “Salient Features,” which examines the relation between obviousness and import in tonal contexts. Conflicts between motivic, harmonic, and rhythmic/metric materials are of uncontested interest, but Rothgeb’s larger argument suffers from poor articulation. Most problematically, “salience” is never satisfactorily defined, although it is asserted that the criteria for musical salience “are far from obvious and are scarcely susceptible to generalization . . . [and] have far less to do with immediate noticeability than is commonly supposed” (181). In the analysis of a Bach prelude, for example, the association between two figures is “more than merely salient: it literally cannot be missed” (184). Later, in the context of Schubert, Rothgeb proposes that “a feature salient by conventional standards is . . . actually subordinate to a more subtle association . . . that should be heard in spite of its apparently inferior degree of salience” (186). He concludes that “salient’ features recede in significance by comparison to tonal shapes that are less obvious but, once perceived, more powerful. These less obvious shapes, indeed, are the salient features of high musical art” (196). The overreliance on a weakly defined concept regrettably clouds the fine points at stake in these examples.

Moving from “so-called art music” (385) to the popular domain is Stephen Gilbert’s “Reflections on a Few Good Tunes: Linear Progression and Intervallic Patterns in Popular Song and Jazz.” Gilbert offers an approach to the analysis of popular song informed by Schenkerian theory. His thesis, that a tune’s melodic and intervallic structure contributes to its suitability for jazz improvisation, is tenable and makes good sense, and there is little reason to doubt that the author is well-versed in jazz lore and adept at “cross-over” analysis. Yet he seems uneasy writing for an audience he assumes to be musically sophisticated but jazz-illiterate. Readers may feel patronized by a discussion of how jazz players “learn” music (without a score!) and what improvisation entails; we are cautioned to “keep in mind . . . that performance practice plays a much larger role in popular song . . . even a straightforward interpretation of a standard takes liberties

unheard of in the world of classical music" (385). In an attempt to instantly familiarize the reader with the subject matter, Gilbert offers excessive historical details. Unfortunately, many of these details pertain only tangentially to the analysis. More helpful to the strong analyses of the songs would have been notated versions of the tunes, which include "Stardust," "How High the Moon," and "Stella by Starlight."

Also from a notably different perspective is Elizabeth West Marvin's "Cognitive Strategies for Recognizing Transposed Melodies," the sole entry in the collection that addresses the important research being done in cognitive music psychology. Marvin focuses on empirical studies that examine how listeners remember melodies, many of which were done in the 1970s by Diana Deutsch and W. Jay Dowling. Appearing more often in psychological publications than music theory journals, the studies suggest how pitch-class, intervallic content, and harmonic context influence the mental representations developed by listeners in response to musical stimuli. Providing a reworking and re-evaluation of Dowling's experiments from the 1970s, Marvin's own experimental work is carefully described in terms of its design, results, and implications. Her findings indicate that listeners tend to be more accurate in recognizing tonal melodies in various transformations than their atonal counterparts; that they use different cognitive strategies depending on the nature of the musical stimulus and according to their prior musical experience; and that they are capable of sensitively discriminating between similar melodies in tonal and atonal contexts. As Marvin contends, these findings have interesting implications for music pedagogy. To a reader versed in the contemporary music psychological literature, however, these findings are not controversial, but have already been strongly supported by the thinkers mentioned above and by Carol Krumhansl (whose substantial contributions are acknowledged in a single footnote). It is unfortunate that the author's pragmatic but narrow focus leads her to omit significant work done on the cognition of contemporary music by Krumhansl, Irène Deliège, Fred Lerdahl, and Stephen McAdams, since knowledge of this colorful discourse would only enhance the reader's appreciation of Marvin's own contribution.

Music Theory in Concept and Practice's stated intention is to reflect the preoccupations of the field today. In this task, it succeeds only in part. The editors have chosen not to focus on the following influences, acknowledged in the introduction: computer science, linguistics, mathematics, literary theory, gender studies, philosophy, aesthetics, and psychology. As a result, set-theoretical and Schenkerian studies dominate the bulk of the text. In explaining their decision, the editors assert that such interdisciplinary work is "not at the heart of the enterprise." They identify three general areas of study as central to music theory, to which their authors

are largely confined: historical research, the theory and analysis of common practice music, and the theory and analysis of the post-tonal repertoire. Many would argue that the areas of interdisciplinary exchange are not as peripheral as the editors maintain. Perhaps it is in the spirit of a fitting tribute that Baker, Beach, and Bernard have chosen not to venture far beyond Forte's shadow. Yet the resultant volume is not one that "well represents the considerable diversity of philosophies and methodologies within the three areas of inquiry," as claimed on page 2. Instead, it is one imbued with an oddly retrospective feel.

References

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Morris, Robert. 1987. *Composition with Pitch-Classes*. New Haven: Yale University Press.