

## TO BE OR NOT TO BE:

### SCHENKER'S VERSUS SCHENKERIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEQUENCES

STEPHEN SLOTTOW

I have several times experienced a sinking feeling upon reading the following passage from *Free Composition* (from a discussion of leading and following linear progressions): “double counterpoint therefore takes its place in the ranks of such fallacious concepts as the ecclesiastical modes, sequences, and the usual explanation of consecutive fifths and octaves” (Schenker 1979, 78). Although I retain a sneaking fondness for double counterpoint, it is largely the presence of sequences in this blacklist that evokes a nostalgic sense of loss.

Schenker was contemptuous towards piecemeal analyses that merely identified different kinds of isolated entities in the music, like landmarks highlighted on a map. In a section of *Free Composition* entitled “Rejection of the conventional terms ‘melody,’ ‘motive,’ ‘idea,’ and the like,” he writes:

Great composers trust their long-range vision. For this reason they do not base their compositions upon some ‘melody,’ ‘motive,’ or ‘idea.’ Rather, the content is rooted in the voice-leading transformations and linear progressions whose unity allows no segmentation or names of segments. (26)

And, in the next paragraph:

One cannot speak of ‘melody’ and ‘idea’ in the work of the masters; it makes even less sense to speak of ‘passage,’ ‘sequence,’ ‘padding,’ or ‘cement’ as if they were terms that one could possibly apply to art. Drawing a comparison to language, what is there in a logically constructed sentence that one could call ‘cement’?” (27)

As Matthew Brown points out, “whereas Fux avoided sequences, Schenker was openly hostile to them. His response was simply to reject them altogether” (Brown 2005,121).

The obvious response to such statements would be to say that Schenker was a serial exaggerator and was indulging in hyperbole, and that sequences (not to mention some of the other items on his list) of course exist but must be understood as part of something larger. Nonetheless, that is *not* what Schenker says. That is, he does not say that sequences lack existence as isolated entities apart from their larger role in the composing out of fundamental structure; he allows them no existence *at all*, on any level. And this judgment is delivered in tones of contempt and derision. The reification of sequences is a denial of “the voice-leading transformations and linear progressions whose unity allows no segmentation or names of segments.”

In this paper I ruminate on: (1) Schenker's uncompromising scorched-earth attitude towards sequences as expressed in some of his words and graphs, (2) the considerably less annihilatory attitudes of Schenkerian theorists, (3) my own thoughts about sequences and their reification, and (4) two sequences: one from the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata in F, K. 280 near the end of the exposition (mm. 35–43); and the other from the development section of Scarlatti's Sonata in E major (K. 380).

I will start with my own view. It seems to me that there is a middle way between attributing a solid autonomous existence to sequences and denying that they exist “no way, no how” (to quote the guard with green whiskers from outside the Emerald City walls), which is to allow them *dependent contingent* existence within the overall voice-leading/harmonic structure. That is, they do not exist apart from their larger context and function, but they do not “not exist” either. They are “things” in the sense that they are processes, whorls within the larger energy

flow. They are important not only within the large voice-leading/harmonic structure; they have their own subsidiary harmonic/voice-leading structures and are of interest both in the macro and micro views. They are contrapuntal models that are always elaborated into varied and manifold forms.

Of course, a danger of reifying them is that they then can then take on a too stubborn solidity, rigidity, and illusory autonomy, as if they were stones plopped here and there into the musical stream, and their role in the larger structure is eclipsed. This is, in part, Schenker's objection to them.

Let us turn from Schenker's words to some of his sketches that include (what I make bold to call) sequential passages. Example 1 reproduces his graph of Bach's C minor Prelude (*Well Tempered Clavier* 1) from *The Masterwork in Music*, Vol. 2 (Schenker 1996, 48). Measures 5–18 show what is basically a stepwise descending sequence in parallel 10ths, embellished by 10–9 progressions (some of which are implied), with ninths resulting from anticipations in the treble.<sup>1</sup> Schenker does not call it a sequence, but instead describes the stepwise descending octave transfer (via passing motion) that prolongs the E<sub>b</sub> *Kopftön* over the tonic bass C. For me, it is still a sequence, in my dependent contingent sense. For Schenker, it is not, in any sense. He writes: “The word ‘sequence’, which is used so frequently and loosely when one is unable to explain certain passing notes, has no validity. The mere fact of its existence as a theoretical term does not lend it any credibility as a concept” (48 fn34).

---

<sup>1</sup> I first read the passage as a series of 9–10 bass suspensions, but reading the ninths as anticipations better accords with Schenker's slurring and two-bar hypermeter.

<sup>2</sup> February 20, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> I have added the 7–10's to indicate the conventional linear intervallic patterns.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion of step progressions in *Harmony*, see Chapter 3 (“Various Types of Step *GAMUT* 8/1 (2018)

EXAMPLE 1. Schenker's graph of Bach's C minor Prelude (*Well Tempered Clavier 1*) from *The Masterwork in Music*, Vol. 2.

Fig. 1

C moll: I ————— I ————— II (II) V —————

presto ————— adagio

Example 2 is Schenker's foreground graph of the accompanying fugue, also from *Masterwork 2* (33). To my mind, there is a falling-fifth sequence in mm. 9–11 that leads from the tonic to the next subject entry in the mediant. The treble descends from G (the *Kopfton*) through F to E $\flat$ . Schenker's graph shows this sequence quite distinctly, complete with Roman numerals. Again, he does not call it a sequence. He writes: "the Urlinie, with its  $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$  motion, strives to attain E $\flat$ 2, while the bass, replicating the semiquaver run, moves in descending fifths until the time is ripe for an arrival on the E $\flat$  triad and thus for the new entry" (40). In mm. 22 the falling-fifth sequence returns even more strongly, again starting on the tonic, but this time continuing past the mediant to the dominant in m. 25. Again, Schenker does not call it a sequence. From my *GAMUT 8/1 (2018)*

point of view (the point of view of a person convinced of the existence of sequences) he will accept what a sequence *does*—that is, he will accept it as a verb, so to speak; he will accept its activity. However, he will not accept what a sequence *is*—he will not accept it as a noun, he will not reify it. He will not utter the word “sequence” except negatively.

Echoing Schenker's comment on the C minor prelude, John Rothgeb believes that Schenker viewed sequences as *Durchgang*, passing motion. He writes in a private email:

Your observation that Schenker “won't reify sequence in *any* way” is correct, and his *explicit* refusal to do so is to be attributed to his tendency toward hyperbole. There are any number of musical passages about which one might ask, “is that not a sequence?” — and anybody in his right mind would answer “yes, of course, it is!” But Schenker *never*, as far as I know, used either of these terms in his work. There were good reasons for his assigning them to the “ranks of . . . *fallacious concepts*,” but his scorn for even the use of such words for the sake of convenience (to designate familiar kinds of occurrences) is a manifestation of his hyperbole, or, one might say, his refusal to yield even an inch on what he considered an important matter of principle . . . Given a case in which the idea is to move through a series of passing tones from a point of departure to a goal, the intent can easily be made manifest if the tones in this series are treated in the same way with respect to diminution. Hence the sorts of passages that everybody calls ‘sequences.’ But the sequence is not the *idea*, it is rather a means to an end (while at the same time obviously manifesting, over and above the primary idea, repetition/association).<sup>2</sup>

In works earlier than *Masterwork* (1925, 1926, and 1930) and *Free Composition* (1935), Schenker's stance, or tone, towards sequences is somewhat milder—he is not so much vehemently opposed to as simply uninterested in them. This is certainly the case in *Harmony* (Schenker [1906] 1954). Unlike such roughly contemporaneous harmony manuals such as Salomon Jadassohn's *A Manual of Harmony* ([1883] 1893, 33–35), and Schoenberg's *Theory of Harmony* ([1911] 1979, 282–83), which discuss sequences in their own right and under their own name as compositional resources, Schenker's *Harmony* contains many examples of sequential passages, but does not focus on their sequential aspect.

---

<sup>2</sup> February 20, 2013.  
*GAMUT 8/1 (2018)*

EXAMPLE 2. Schenker's graph of Bach's C minor Fugue (*Well Tempered Clavier* 1) from *The Masterwork in Music*, Vol. 2.

The image displays Schenker's graph for the C minor Fugue, consisting of five systems of musical notation. Each system shows a portion of the score with Schenkerian analysis symbols (Roman numerals, 'Wohn', 'Es dur', 'Quintzug') and chord progressions written below the notes. The analysis includes:

- System 1:** Tonarten: I — IV — (Wohn) — II — V — I/IV — (Wohn) — #VII — V. Tonalität: I — C moll — (-V) —.
- System 2:** I — IV — (Wohn) — V — I/VI — Es dur.
- System 3:** II — V — III — IV — (Wohn) — VII — V — I/C moll — III — V.
- System 4:** I — IV — (Wohn) — V — I — (IV VII III VI II) — V.
- System 5:** (I V) — I.

Other annotations include 'Quartzug' and 'Quintzug' indicating specific intervallic movements. Measure numbers 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 are marked at the beginning of their respective systems.

For instance, in reference to the first ten measures of Brahms's Intermezzo in B $\flat$  minor, Op. 117 no. 2 (see Example 3), Schenker 1954 does not focus on the sequence in mm. 2–5, but observes that:

[the excerpt] demonstrates an exhaustive application of inversion in a minor mode. The transition from measure 2 to measure 3 shows the inversion I–IV, followed, in measure 3, by the inversion IV–VII, leading . . . to the fifth fifth in rising order. The following measures begin a descent, fifth by fifth: VII–III–VI–II–V, down to the tonic (I). (47–48)<sup>3</sup>

That is, he uses the example as a hobbyhorse to demonstrate a number of things. One is “inversion.” In *Harmony*, Schenker regards the rising fifth as *natural* because it occurs in the overtone series, whereas the falling fifth is, therefore, *inverted* (Schenker 1954, 31–32). Another topic is harmonic progression (i.e., “step progressions”) by falling fifths between chord roots, whether it occurs in a fully sequential context, such as the 7–10 linear intervallic progressions in mm. 2–5, or in the nonsequential close of the phrase in mm. 5–10 (Schenker makes no distinction between them).<sup>4</sup> A third topic is the primacy of the major over the minor modes:

...it [Schenker's analysis] proves that the principle of step progression in the minor mode is not at all original but has been transferred artificially, nay, forcibly, from the major mode, out of this necessity. And it proves . . . that for this very reason the natural major mode is no doubt superior to the minor mode. (48)

The point is that although Schenker discusses sequential passages in *Harmony*, the strictly sequential aspect is incidental to his other purposes.

Despite Schenker's later withering contempt for nonexistent sequences, they hesitantly began to creep back from the ocean of nonexistence to which they had been consigned towards the terra firma of at least provisional actuality in the writings of Schenkerian analysts, who have

---

<sup>3</sup> I have added the 7–10's to indicate the conventional linear intervallic patterns.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion of step progressions in *Harmony*, see Chapter 3 (“Various Types of Step Progressions”), 232–40.

been, in this as well as in some other matters, less severe than Schenker himself. Absent an exhaustive survey (which I have not carried out), I list a few instances here.

EXAMPLE 3. Schenker's Annotations to Brahms, Intermezzo in B $\flat$  minor, Op. 117 no. 2, mm. 1–10, from *Harmony* (7-10's mine).

*Andante non troppo e con molto espressione*

The image displays a musical score for Brahms' Intermezzo in B $\flat$  minor, Op. 117 no. 2, measures 1–10. The score is annotated with Schenker's fingerings and pedal markings. The first system shows measures 1–2 with a *P dolce* dynamic and a *col. Ped (II)* marking. The second system shows measures 3–4 with fingerings (7), (10), and (7) and pedal markings I, IV, and VII. The third system shows measures 5–6 with fingerings (10), (7), and (10) and pedal markings III, VI, and II. The fourth system shows measures 7–8 with a *pp* dynamic and a *P* dynamic. The fifth system shows measures 9–10 with a *Ped.* marking and a circled section of the bass line. The circled section includes a 7/4 time signature and a 6/8 time signature.



Allen Forte's *Tonal Harmony in Concept & Practice* (1979), while not a book about Schenkerian analysis, is strongly informed by it. Forte does not discuss what are commonly called sequences as a single phenomenon, but divides them into different aspects with (in some cases) different names, which he treats piecemeal. First he separates sequences into harmonic and melodic aspects, although all but one of his examples are sequential both in ways. And in the case of the exception, his reduction demonstrates that slightly under the surface, it too is sequential, both melodically and harmonically (151).<sup>5</sup> He discusses descending-fifth harmonic sequences with triads (104–06) and seventh chords (151–52), melodic sequences—his example is, again, a descending-fifth sequence (221–22)—and real chromatic sequences with examples from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal* (516–17). In his section on harmonic sequences (Section 60, *Circular Progression by Sequence*) he shows a falling-fifth sequence and comments that “a progression of this kind, which involves the repetition of a bass and chord pattern, is called a *sequence*” (105). In contrast, he defines melodic sequence as “a melody that features immediate repetition of a pattern at different pitch levels. . .” (221). Nowhere does he attempt to provide a typology of sequence types.

Forte also distinguishes between sequences and what he terms linear intervallic patterns (LIPs), giving far more attention to the latter, which he defines as “repetitive patterns formed by the outer voices” (1979, 363). He goes on to say “patterns of this kind are sometimes called sequences . . . The term linear intervallic pattern is preferred, however, since the melodic detail may change while the pattern remains constant” (364). Unlike his treatment of sequences, which is rather cursory, he provides fuller discussion, complete with multi-level graphs, for his section on LIPs.

---

<sup>5</sup> See Example 163 from J.S. Bach, *Well-Tempered Clavier*, I, Prelude in A♭. *GAMUT 8/1 (2018)*

Carl Schachter and Edward Aldwell's *Harmony and Voice Leading* was first published in two volumes in 1978–79. Although—like Forte's text—it is not a book about Schenkerian analysis, it is written from a Schenkerian perspective, and contains a thorough treatment of sequences. As compared to Forte, Aldwell and Schachter present sequences more as a single, if flexible, phenomenon; they do not make a point of dividing sequences into melodic and harmonic aspects, nor do they separate LIPs from sequences in general. Also unlike Forte, they present a typology of sequences (though not exhaustive), mainly in four types: descending fifth, ascending fifth, ascending 5–6, and descending 5–6 (also known as “descending third”). Each type is then discussed in terms of its manifold triadic, seventh chord, diatonic, and chromatic subtypes. An appendix in the fourth edition includes a compendium of all these types in the form of keyboard progressions (702–07). Without using Schenkerian terminology, Aldwell and Schachter show how some of the phenomena dealt with in Schenkerian analysis operate within sequences. The primary example of this orientation is the explanation that sequences function most often as expansions, either of a single harmony or of the motion between two harmonies—either to “form a transition between the beginning of a motion and its goal,” to “contain both the transition and the goal,” or “to expand a single chord” (2011, 305). Other examples include the primacy of one over the other stepwise line in descending-fifth sequences, reaching over, and register transfers (306–310). Far from denying the existence of sequences, Aldwell and Schachter present the more common sequence types and elaborations, demonstrating how at least some Schenkerian techniques operate within sequences, and how sequences in turn function in larger prolongational contexts.

Sequences continued to infiltrate the Schenkerian edifice in Allen Forte's and Steven Gilbert's *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (1982), which continues and perhaps even

intensifies Forte's earlier emphasis on LIPs and his reluctance to associate them too closely with sequences. Again, it is specifically stated that LIPs and sequences are not synonymous. In the Instructor's Manual—there is similar language in the text—they write:

Some students and teachers will want to call linear intervallic patterns “sequences.” There is no objection to this so long as it remains clear that sequence means melodic sequence: i.e., a sequential pattern in a single voice, and not a sequential pattern formed by two voices. It is always possible that, in a particular context, a melodic sequence may cease, while the accompanying linear intervallic pattern will continue. (25)

To me this definition of sequence seems unduly restrictive—surely a sequence need not be limited to a single voice—and, indeed, most of the examples in Forte and Gilbert's LIP chapter (Chapter 4) are sequential.

Allen Cadwallader's and David Gagné's *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach* ([1998] 2011), does not continue Forte and Gilbert's caginess around the relation of LIPs to sequences. The very first sentence of the section on LIPs in Chapter 4 is “Harmonic sequences often involve a repeated interval pattern between a pair of voices; these are known as *linear intervallic patterns*” (86). And the paragraph continues:

Sequences and associated linear intervallic patterns produce harmonic prolongations and larger structural connections. And, like linear progressions, linear intervallic patterns prolong a single harmonic class or expand the space *between* classes in T–Int–D–T frameworks. (86–7)

And, a little later:

Note that we are not focusing here on a single-line linear progression, but on a recurring pattern that involves two voices moving in a complementary manner. In textures of more than two voices, chords naturally arise in conjunction with the repeated pattern, thereby forming chordal sequences. The chords in the pattern, like the linear chords discussed in Chapter 3, therefore result from contrapuntal motion. (87–88)

Here sequences appear to have finally come into their own in a Schenkerian context and finally put their nihilistic shame behind them. They have been explicitly recognized in their own right and under their own names as full participants in the “voice-leading transformations and linear progressions” that comprise the process of composing-out. No conflict between sequences as things and sequences as voice-leading processes remains.

Thus far in my selective survey of the road from Schenker's condemnation to Schenkerians' affirmation of sequences, I have only discussed textbooks. But there has also been serious consideration of the role of sequences in Schenkerian theory in more rigorous (or, at least, less pedagogical) venues. Here, I briefly discuss three of these (out of many more) in works by William Renwick, Chanan Willner, and Matthew Brown.<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 5 of William Renwick's book *Analyzing Fugue: A Schenkerian Approach* (1995, 139–64) is titled “Sequence and Episode.”<sup>7</sup> He begins distinguishing between sequences and episodes. With sequences,

Strictly speaking, issues of prolongation and progression, and of structural levels and harmonic function have no relevance to the study of pure sequences, just as questions of prolongation and structural levels are not a part of Schenker's consideration of strict counterpoint. On the other hand, consideration of *episodes* from a Schenkerian perspective views the manner in which episodes serve prolonging and progressional functions . . . Accordingly, Chapter 5 focuses on the underlying patterning of sequences and examines how they function within the complete episodes as pattern of prolongation and progression. (139)

Renwick then proceeds to categorizing sequence patterns as follows:

The primary distinction is between descent and ascent, giving two large categories, descending sequences and ascending sequences. Within this broad division are three subdivisions, characterized by interval of transposition: step, third, and fifth. Thus, in terms of interval of transposition, there are six distinct sequence patterns

---

<sup>6</sup> A caveat: the following are not official reviews *per se* and have no pretense to thoroughness; they are only intended to convey a sense of these theorists' different approaches towards sequences.

<sup>7</sup> Renwick 1995 also includes a chapter on invertible counterpoint (79–108), another of Schenker's “fallacious concepts” (1979, 78).

those that descend (1) by step, (2) by third, (3) by fifth, and those that ascend (4) by step, (5) by third, and (6) by fifth. (140)

Renwick's categorization differs somewhat from Aldwell and Schachter's basic sequence types. In the latter, descent by step is not a category, since it is built into the descending-fifth sequence (the interval of transposition between units is a descending step). However, Renwick frames the main issue in descending-step sequences as the avoidance or disruption of parallel fifths and octaves. Many of his examples are based on the descending-fifth sequence, but others are not, such as descending sixth chords and 6–5 or 7–6 chain suspensions (144–45). In his treatment of these types and their often quite complex realizations, Renwick sometimes also incorporates discussions of invertible counterpoint in sequences and canonic patterns based on sequences.<sup>8</sup> He also briefly comments on Schenker's reluctance to discuss sequences:

Clearly a basic reason for avoiding the topic of sequences within his [Schenker's] work on strict counterpoint is the larger avoidance of repetitive patterning, and thus of motivic development, within that work. One of the difficulties that sequences presented for Schenker and his theory of tonal structure is that for the duration of a sequence a given pattern of voice leading takes precedence over any harmonic considerations. Thus a typical sequence is not so much tonal in itself, but represents a passage between two points of a tonal system. (140)

Channan Willner's work is centered on phrase rhythm in Baroque instrumental music, in which sequences frequently function as expansions (see Willner 1995, and especially 1999 and 2005). In "Sequential Expansion and Handelian Phrase Rhythm," he writes:

On account of the intensity with which sequences pervade the fabric of Baroque style, sequential expansion as such must be considered one of its fundamental procedures. Unlike discrete durational expansion, sequential expansion comprises a string of expansions that can stretch over a considerable span of time and therefore occupy substantial areas of the piece. (1999, 198)

The concept of sequential expansion rests upon the idea of the *basic pace*, "the even, largely stepwise motion of the outer voices that flows just under the surface." A related term, the

---

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, pp. 158–60.  
*GAMUT 8/1 (2018)*

*basic step*, is “the underlying time span of each chord that realizes one step of the basic pace” (1995, 444). Willner considers sequences to consist of principal and ancillary chords in each of the sequence’s two, three, or four components; the ancillary chord is “an applied dominant or contrapuntal sonority that precedes or follows the principal chord of the component. The time span this subservient chord occupies may represent an anticipation or extension of the principal chord’s time span.”<sup>9</sup> Ancillary chords often disrupt otherwise resulting parallel fifths and octaves: so, for example, in ascending or descending 5–6 sequences, the second chord would be ancillary and, in many cases, the same would apply to descending-fifth sequences. Sequential expansion occurs when the duration of the chords in each unit are lengthened, resulting in a doubling or quadrupling of the basic pace. For that matter, the duration of the chords in each unit also can be shortened, resulting in sequential contraction.

The above points are illustrated in my Example 4, which reproduces Example 2 from Willner 1999 (195).<sup>10</sup> In Example 4a, the quarter-note basic pace is shown under m. 1. There is a sequence comprised of stepwise descending tenths in mm. 3–4, in which the previous quarter-note basic pace is contracted to eighth notes. The second chords in each unit are ancillary and (somewhat) disrupt the parallel fifths with an initial (implied) 5–6 exchange followed by chain 7–6 suspensions. In Example 4c, the basic pace in the descending-fifth sequence in mm. 27–28 is expanded to half notes, and again the ancillary chords in each unit break up the threatened parallel fifths (more definitively than in m.3).

---

<sup>9</sup> See Willner 2005, abstract. At deeper levels the ancillary chord disappears altogether and the main chord takes up its space through rhythmic normalization See also Willner 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Willner’s full commentary spans pp. 194–98.

EXAMPLE 4. Channan Willner 1999, Example 2. Handel, Suite in F Minor (1720), Allemande, compound 4/4 time: sequential contraction and expansion.

a) Bars 1-4

Basic pace:

Contracted basic pace

Expanded basic pace

b) Bars 20-21

Basic pace:  
(no expansion)

c) Bars 27-29

Expanded basic pace:

Basic pace resumes

Chapter 3 (“What Price Consistency?”) of Matthew Brown's book *Explaining Tonality: Schenkerian Theory and Beyond* (2005) is devoted to the topic of sequences, and to what Brown sees as two problems in the treatment of sequences in Schenkerian analysis. However, neither of Brown's problems are the same as Schenker's problem with sequences, which is that they are a “fallacious concept;” Brown does not regard sequences as fallacious or nonexistent. He dubs his problems “The Parallel Problem” and “The Top-Down/Bottom-Up Problem.”

The Parallel Problem concerns parallel perfect octaves and fifths. Brown infers from Schenker's motto, *semper idem sed non eodem modo* (“always the same but never in the same way”), that forbidden parallels must be consistently forbidden at every level of structure; whereas common practice in Schenkerian analysis is that such parallels may appear in the middleground but be corrected in the foreground, or the reverse. As Brown notes, Schenker does not draw the same inference from his motto (100). In *Free Composition*, he writes the following:

The foreground does sometimes show 8–8 or 5–5 successions. But these are only seemingly parallels. The successions are justified by the voice-leading in the middleground and background from which they originate, where 8–8 and 5–5 successions are nonexistent. In this sense, the apparent parallels in the foreground must be sanctioned because their middleground and background successions are correct. (57–58)

And, a little earlier,

Conversely, the middleground frequently displays forbidden successions; it is then the task of the foreground to eliminate them. (56)

Sequences are a perfect example of the latter situation. For instance, in the ascending 5–6 sequence (in which the interval of transposition is the ascending step), the foreground sixths break up middleground parallel fifths. In the descending fifth sequence (in which the interval of transposition is the descending step), every other fifth on the foreground breaks up likely parallel fifths and octaves in the middleground. But Brown sees this state of affairs as contradictory,



since it means that fundamental rules of voice leading are not consistently operative on each level.

The Top-Down/Bottom-Up Problem involves a conflict of viewing the structural weight of a sequential chord as a component of “some sort of repeating melodic, contrapuntal, or harmonic pattern” (“bottom-up”) versus viewing it in terms of the prolongation and composing-out of harmonies and harmonic progressions (“top-down”) (101).

In order to construct sequences in such a way as to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of the Parallel and Top-Down/Bottom-Up problems, Brown devises a “new way to generate sequences” not based on outer-voice patterns (LIPs) or repeating transposed bass motions, but instead from parallel stepwise motion in the upper voices; these avoid forbidden parallels on any level, thus solving the Parallel Problem (136). The Top-Down/Bottom-Up problem is solved by considering sequences as fundamentally contrapuntal, not harmonic (Renwick would agree), but starting from a harmonic point of departure and leading to a harmonic goal; in Chapter 3 all of his derived sequences express tonic prolongation and lead to a cadence (103–17). He then discusses how proto-sequences can derive from stepwise descents in Fux's *cantus firmus* (when counterpointed, particularly in mixed species, they can give rise to descending sequential passages). Brown's chapter ends with a consideration of the relation of leading and following linear progressions to sequences in and analyses of four pieces by Bach.

The work of Renwick, Willner, and Brown are examples of how far serious consideration of sequences has penetrated into Schenkerian theory and practice since Schenker's death: Renwick, in the context of fugue; Willner, in the study of Baroque phrase rhythm; and Brown, in his endeavor to make Schenkerian theory and analysis more rigorous and consistent.

As I mention earlier, sequences are not only important within the large harmonic/voice-leading structure; they have their own harmonic/voice-leading structures and are of interest both in the macro and micro views.

Example 5 gives the music from the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata in F, K. 280. Example 6 is my graph of mm. 35–43, right before the coda that ends the exposition. In the first half of the movement the *Urlinie* has descended from the *Kopfton* C ( $\hat{5}/I$ ) to G ( $\hat{2}/V$ ). Beginning in m.35, a sequence initiates a subsidiary fifth-descent from  $\hat{2}$  (G–F–E–D–C) over an auxiliary cadence in the dominant. Basically, the sequence ascends a perfect fourth in stepwise tenths as the bass rises chromatically from E to A; the top notes of the tenths ascend G–A–B–C but are elaborated by coupling—boomeranging down and up in a series of register transfers (C in m. 40 appears only in the low register, at the sequence's end).<sup>11</sup> The upper-register notes coincide with chromatic passing tones in the bass, creating a series of applied dominant chords. And the rising 10–10 progressions are counterpointed, as it were, by a series of 10–8 LIPs which create subsidiary octave resolutions against the tenths (G–F, A–G, B–implied A), in addition to the series of 5–6 LIPs over alternate bass notes. The sequence carries the passage from I<sub>6</sub> to VI (Roman numerals are in the key of the dominant), after which there is a multiple voice exchange in which the formerly implied soprano A appears, functioning as an upper-level incomplete neighbor from *Urlinie*  $\hat{2}$  (G), followed by the subsidiary fifth-descent from  $\hat{2}$ : (G)–F–E–D–C. The sequence helps to expand the motion from I<sub>6</sub> to II<sub>6</sub> (and from G/E to F/F), but does so in an intricate and ingenious way.

---

<sup>11</sup> This sequence is an instance of Schenker's distinction between leading and following voices, which is operative especially when linear progressions in two voices are doubled at a constant numerical interval and when, as a result, one voice expresses one harmony from beginning to end and the other does not. In this case the treble, whose linear progression G–A–B–C is entirely within C major harmony, is the leading voice. The bass, whose line E–F–(F#)–G–(G#)–A does not stay within C major harmony, is the following voice.

EXAMPLE 5. Mozart, Piano Sonata in F, K. 280, I, mm. 27–56.

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata in F major, K. 280, measures 27 through 56. The score is presented in seven systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one flat (F major), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various musical elements such as dynamics (piano 'p' and forte 'f'), articulation (accents, slurs), and ornaments (trills). The first system begins at measure 27, the second at 32, the third at 36, the fourth at 40, the fifth at 44, the sixth at 48, and the seventh at 52. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the seventh system.

EXAMPLE 6. Mozart, Piano Sonata in F, K. 280, I, mm. 35–43, sketch.

The image shows a musical score for Mozart's Piano Sonata in F, K. 280, I, mm. 35–43, sketch. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves: treble and bass. Above the treble staff, there are circled numbers 35 and 40. Below the treble staff, there are circled numbers 2(3) and 4 3 2 1. The bass staff has a large slur under it. Below the bass staff, there are Roman numerals: C: 16, 5-6, 5-6, VI5-6, (5-6), II6 V6-7, I. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

More extensive sequences often underlie development sections. A good example can be found in the movement from Mozart K. 280 just discussed (Beach 1994, 215–18 and Slottow 2015, 134–39); but I will instead discuss a more unusual example, the development section of Scarlatti's Sonata in E major, K. 380. Due to the idiosyncratic form of this (and most) Scarlatti sonatas the term “development” is perhaps anachronistic, so, following Kirkpatrick (1953, 264), I will simply call it the “excursion,” which here is located in the first part of the second half, right after the double bar. The music (mm. 41–57) can be found in Example 7.

Because the section is entirely in the dominant (B major), I use Roman numerals in that key. See my foreground graph in Example 8a. In mm. 41–51, the stepwise descending bass is comprised of two third-progressions: B–A–G#, I to VI#3, functioning as V/II; then G#–F#–E, V/II to II<sub>6</sub> (C#m/E). The structural upper voice starts on B4 and jumps up through B#5 to C#6 in m. 51. So, to summarize, the first part of the excursion moves (in the key of the dominant) from B/B (I) to C#/E (II<sub>6</sub>).

EXAMPLE 7. Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata in E Major, K. 380 (Longo 23), mm. 41–57.

The image displays a musical score for Domenico Scarlatti's Sonata in E Major, K. 380, specifically measures 41 through 57. The score is presented in a grand staff format, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is E major, indicated by two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into five systems, each starting with a measure number: 41, 45, 49, 53, and 56. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks such as accents and trills. The right hand (treble clef) features a melodic line with frequent eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand (bass clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving bass lines.

EXAMPLE 8. Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata in E Major, K. 380 (Longo 23), mm. 41–57, sketch.

41 45 51

B: I VI<sup>3</sup> II<sup>6</sup> V

54 57

Example 8b. Mm. 51-57, falling fifths sequence. Example 8c. Deep middleground.

51 54 57 41 51 55 56 57

I II<sup>6</sup> V<sup>3</sup> I II<sup>6</sup> V I I II<sup>6</sup> V I I II<sup>6</sup> V I

I would like to focus on the end, mm. 51–57, which composes out a descending-fifth (or here perhaps it could be better described as an ascending-fourth) sequence composed of a series of three interlocking and overlapping fifth-descents in the treble over a harmonic progression from C# minor to F# minor to B minor, confirmed by a cadential II<sub>6</sub>–V–I in B in mm. 55–57. An interesting point is that the cadence at the beginning of m. 57 to a triple-octave B is, strictly speaking, modally neutral or ambiguous. The presence of D $\flat$  throughout the sequence after m. 52 (and especially in the B minor chord in m.55), certainly implies a cadence to B minor in m. 57;

but D $\sharp$  is introduced in the very next measure (m. 58), restoring the proper major third of the dominant of E major. I have shown the bones of this sequence in Example 8b.

Under the high C $\sharp$  in m 51, G $\sharp$ 5 (which has been the main local treble tone ever since m. 46) initiates a descending fifth progression from G $\sharp$ 5 to C $\sharp$ 5. At first, this looks like it may lead to an imperfect cadence (VII $_6$ -I $_6$ ) in C $\sharp$  minor, but the expected D $\sharp$  is altered to D $\natural$  and the expected bass E $\natural$  is chromatically raised to E $\sharp$  (the leading tone of F $\sharp$ ), aborting the expected cadence and ushering the music into the local key of F $\sharp$  minor.

Now the same process is repeated a fourth higher. Above the descending fifth-progression from G $\sharp$  to C $\sharp$  just described, the high C $\sharp$ 5 has been retained from m. 51 and in its turn initiates another fifth-descent, this time from C $\sharp$ 6 to F $\sharp$ 6, beginning before the previous G $\sharp$ -C $\sharp$  fifth-descent has finished. Again, an anticipated cadence on F $\sharp$  minor is aborted by the change of expected treble note G $\sharp$  to G $\natural$  and the alteration of expected bass A to A $\sharp$ , the leading tone of B.

Then, for the third time, the pattern repeats a fourth higher. A retained and very high F $\sharp$ 6 (implied from m. 53) initiates a final cadential fifth-descent into the perfect authentic cadence on B minor. A deeper middleground reading, which, so to speak, surrounds and rides on the back of the sequences, is shown in Example 6c. My main point here is that an understanding of the ingenious interlocking sequential structure is important for an adequate understanding of this marvelous and somehow surprising passage.

In conclusion, this article examines Schenker's conviction that sequences are literally nonentities because, as he claims in *Free Composition*, "the content is rooted in the voice-leading transformations and linear progressions whose unity allows no segmentation or names of segments" (26). I suggest that, on the contrary, the content *does* allow "segmentation or names of

*GAMUT 8/1 (2018)*

segments” if sequences are taken to mean not isolated autonomous entities but energetic processes within the larger ongoing structure—which is, in fact, how present-day Schenkerians appear to view them. Furthermore, I suggest that recognizing sequences as composed-out fundamental patterns in their own right is important in understanding the larger-scale multilevel, energetic unfolding of the musical work.

#### WORKS CITED

- Aldwell, Edward, Carl Schachter, and Allen Cadwallader. 2011. *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 4th ed. Cengage/Schirmer.
- Beach, David. 1994. *Advanced Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive, and Form*. Routledge.
- Brown, Matthew. 2005. *Explaining Tonality: Schenkerian Theory and Beyond*. University of Rochester Press.
- Cadwallader, Allen and David Gagné. 2011. *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach*, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press.
- Forte, Allen and Steven Gilbert. 1979. *Tonal Harmony in Concept & Practice*, 3rd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Originally published., 1962.
- . 1982a. *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*. W.W. Norton.
- . 1982b. *Instructor's Manual for Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*. New W.W. Norton.
- Jadassohn, Salomon. 1893. *A Manual of Harmony*. Trans. Theodore Baker. Schirmer. Trans. of *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*. Breitkopf & Härtel, 2nd ed., 1887. Originally pub. 1883.
- Renwick, William. 1995. *Analyzing Fugue: A Schenkerian Approach*. Pendragon Press
- Schenker, Heinrich. 1954. *Harmony*, ed. Elisabeth Mann Borgese, trans. Oswald Jonas. 1954. University of Chicago Press. Trans. of *Neue Musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*, Part I, *Harmonielehre*. Universal Edition, 1906.
- . 1979. *Free Composition (Der freie Satz)*. Ed. and trans. Ernst Oster. Longman Press.



- . 1996a. *The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook*. Vol II. Ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent, William Drabkin, John Rothgeb, and Hedi Siegel. Cambridge University Press. (Orig. pub. 1926.)
- Schoenberg, Arnold. 1978. *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter. University of California Press. Trans. of *Harmonielehre*, 3rd ed. Universal Edition, 1922 (original ed., 1911).
- Slottow, Stephen. 2015. "Sequences in Mozart's Piano Sonata, K. 280/I." *Res Musica* 7, 128–42.
- Willner, Channan. 1995. "Sequential Expansion and Baroque Phrase Rhythm," Paper presented at the American Musicological Society annual meeting, New York. Available at [www.channanwillner.com/publications.htm](http://www.channanwillner.com/publications.htm) (accessed October 27, 2016).
- . 1999. "Sequential Expansion and Handelian Phrase Rhythm." In *Schenker Studies* 2, ed. Carl Schachter and Hedi Siegel Cambridge U. Press, 192–221.
- . 2005. *Durational Pacing in Handel's Instrumental Works: The Nature of Temporality in the Music of the High Baroque*. Ph.D. dissertation, The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Stephen Slottow is associate professor of music theory at the University of North Texas. He received a bachelor's degree from Cleveland State University, a master's from Queens College, and a Ph.D. from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where he wrote a dissertation on pitch organization in the music of Carl Ruggles, for which he was awarded the 2000 Emerging Scholar Award by the Music Theory Society of New York.