Sprachmodelle in der zeitgenössischen amerikanischen Musikanalyse. Rhetorik (Peter A. Hoyt), Semiotik (Patrick McCreless), Narrativität (Thomas Christensen)

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The Classical Oration as a Model for Musical Form in the Eighteenth Century

Although concepts derived from rhetoric contributed significantly to musical thought during the Baroque period, the importance of this relationship has often been considered to wane after the middle of the eighteenth century. According to Friedrich Blume, for example, this decline occurred as the generation of Bach's sons replaced "*überlebten Formeln der künstlerischen Rede*" with a mode of expression reflecting the "*Erguß des natürlich fühlenden Herzens*."[1] Similarly, Dietrich Bartel and George Buelow see rhetoric – which was concerned with the manipulation of "*objective and generally valid affections*" – as becoming irrelevant once the affections were regarded as "*subjective, personal emotions originating within the composer*."[2]

Recently, however, a number of scholars working in the United States have questioned this common reading of rhetoric's history. These authors have based a variety of interpretative claims upon the observation that the theorists, critics, and historians of the late eighteenth century frequently compared the forms of music and of oratory.[3] Although sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors also used rhetorical terminology in discussing the parts of musical works, these metaphors were applied only in the most general fashion – typically only to indicate the beginning, middle, and end of a piece.[4] Eighteenth-century accounts, on the other hand, advanced such analogies in remarkable detail. Both Johann Mattheson (in his *Kern melodischer Wissenschafft* of 1737 and again in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* of 1739) and Johann Nikolaus Forkel (in the introduction to his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* of 1788) related various musical structures to the classical six-part formal oration. This venerable design contained an *exordium* (which stirs the good-will of the audience), a *narratio* (giving the facts of the case), a *propositio* (setting forth the concerns of the speech), a *confirmatio* (which presents supporting arguments), a *confutatio* (refuting opposing arguments), and a *peroratio* (containing an appeal to the emotions of the audience).

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[1]   Friedrich Blume: Art. *Barock*, in MGG, ed. Friedrich Blume, vol. 1, 1949, col. 1292.

[2]   Dietrich Bartel: *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music*, Lincoln 1997, p. 157. George J. Buelow: *Rhetoric and Music*, in: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, vol. 15, London 1980, col. 802.

[3]   These metaphorical images touch on a wide variety of issues, including performance, as in George Barth's: *The Pianist as Orator: Beethoven and the Transformation of Keyboard Style*, Ithaca 1992.

[4]   See, for example, the discussions of the treatises of Gallus Dressler and Joachim Burmeister in Ian Bent with William Drabkin: *Analysis*, New York 1987, p. 6-7.

Other late eighteenth-century figures, such as Heinrich Christoph Koch and Abbé Georg Joseph Vogler, also alluded to rhetorical concepts in their writings, and this has encouraged musicologists to use such concepts in their analyses of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

This tendency is perhaps most strongly represented in a 1991 book by Mark Evan Bonds entitled *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration*. Bonds presents an extensive survey of eighteenth-century writings that regard music as comparable to rhetoric, and he maintains that *"the centrality of the rhetorical terms,"* and their wide acceptance, *"reflects some of the basic premises behind contemporary attitudes toward the issue of form."*[5] Specifically, the theorists and aestheticians regarded the individual work of instrumental music as a *"wordless oration whose purpose was to move the listener."* In turn, the structure of this oration shared a rationale with the conventions represented in *"traditional, verbal rhetoric."*[6] Bonds thereby asserts the prevalence of an intellectual climate in which Haydn and other composers embodied the aesthetic position found in the classical rhetorical treatises.

This creates a historical view that departs from many modern beliefs concerning both rhetoric and musical structure. For example, it is now common in discussions of sonata form to contrast the harmonic orientation of eighteenth-century theorists with the thematic preoccupations of nineteenth-century descriptions. According to Bonds, however, Haydn uses sonata form in a "thematic" fashion, in that he explores his motivic material much as a rhetorician examines a verbal proposition. Even contrasting themes can be accommodated in this perspective, because exploring a proposition may require an examination of opposing ideas. Bonds's rhetorical approach also reconciles *"absolute"* and *"program"* music by regarding both as concerned with *"the unfolding of the work's central idea."*[7]

Considered as an oration, the musical work is an event *"whose purpose is to evoke a response from the listener,"*[8] and Bonds's analyses examine how composers play upon their audience's understanding of large-scale structural conventions. Thus he devotes particular attention to the *"false recapitulation"* in Haydn's Symphony No. 46 in B Major of 1772 and the *"false repeat of the exposition"* that begins the development of Beethoven's first *"Razumovsky"* Quartet of Opus 59.[9]

These analyses – and the presumptions that authorize them – are often problematic,[10] but these difficulties are often disguised by a two-part operation that characterizes many explorations of oratory in recent writings. First, in order to make it seem plausible that Classical composers were influenced by rhetorical considerations, these modern accounts argue that the late eighteenth century was deeply concerned with

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5   Mark Evan Bonds: *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oratio*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, p. 8.

6   Ibid., p. 4.

7   Ibid., p. 174.

8   Ibid., p. 145.

9   Ibid., pp. 192-204 and pp. 16-20.

10   See Peter A. Hoyt: *Review of Mark Evan Bonds, Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration*, in: Journal of Music Theory 38 (1994), pp. 123-43.

formal eloquence: it is noted that the school curriculum still included training in Latin rhetoric, it is observed that Leopold Mozart purchased a copy of Gottsched's *Ausführliche Redekunst* in 1755,[11] and evidence is produced to show that both Haydn and Beethoven were familiar with *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*.[12] All this seems to testify to the continuing influence of oratory on music, and therefore to authorize the use of rhetorical concepts in discussing music of the Classical period.

The second component of this operation moves in the opposite direction: having portrayed rhetoric as a vital part of late eighteenth-century aesthetics, these accounts then *minimize* the importance of the actual details of the ancient six-part structure. It is maintained that this structure merely elaborates a more elemental process, typically a three-part model that happens to correspond closely to the three parts of sonata form. Despite the warning of Clemens Kühn: "*von Exposition, Durchführung, Reprise ist nirgends die Rede*,"[13] this maneuver links the most prestigious of the Classical forms to the aesthetics of Cicero and Quintilian.

The two components of this operation can be found in Bonds. Although he quotes authors ranging from Mattheson to Schoenberg – all of whom he considers to represent a rhetorical perspective – Bonds never actually analyzes a composition as exemplifying the models of either Mattheson or Forkel. Instead, Bonds emphasizes the "*rationale*" behind rhetorical rules and precepts rather than the rules and precepts themselves;[14] he asserts that Mattheson's central point in presenting the classical model of the oration is "*not so much the six-part schema itself as the idea of thematic elaboration.*"[15] This view allows Bonds to reduce the six-part structure of the oration to a sequence in which "*a basic idea is presented, developed, and examined again in light of other ideas derived from it.*"[16] This three-part design is equated with sonata form.

Other scholars have pursued similar strategies. Kofi Agawu, working independently of Bonds, published in the same year a volume entitled *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music.* Agawu also invokes Mattheson's six-part model as reflecting the rhetorical concerns of the eighteenth century, but he considers it important to distinguish between "*the actual contents of the model, and the sequence of functions.*"[17] By emphasizing the functions of the Exordium, the Propositio, and the Peroratio, and by noting that "*it is Mattheson's belief that the rhetorical strength of a composer's musical ideas be given in a particular order, the strongest arguments at the beginning, the weaker ones in the middle, and stronger ones at the end,*"[18] Agawu concludes that "*what is of interest here is not merely the rhetorical*

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[11]　Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 61.
[12]　Ibid., p. 90.
[13]　Clemens Kühn, Art. *Form*, in MGG2S, vol. 3, 1995, col. 630.
[14]　Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 5.
[15]　Ibid., p. 88.
[16]　Ibid., p. 88.
[17]　V. Kofi Agawu: *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music*, Princeton 1991, p. 52.
[18]　Ibid., p. 52.

ploy, but the implicit recognition of a whole structure shaped by three constituent parts." This allows him to develop a "beginning-middle-ending paradigm" and to suggest that Mattheson's model anticipates the three-part division of the *Ursatz* in Schenkerian theory. Just as Bonds had seen a connection between Mattheson and Schoenberg, Agawu uses rhetoric to link Baroque procedures to the theories of Heinrich Schenker.

Agawu studied with Leonard Ratner, whose writings on the history of sonata form have been highly influential in the United States. Ratner's work, particularly his 1980 book entitled *Classical Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, also emphasizes the role of rhetoric during the late eighteenth century. A cornerstone of Ratner's thought is the notion of the musical "*topic*," which he considers a characteristic figure "*associated with various feelings and affections*" or exhibiting a "*picturesque flavor.*"[19] It is "*a subject to be incorporated in a discourse*,"[20] and it "*formed part of a musical language understood by composers, performers, and listeners, and constituted a vast thesaurus of 'words' and 'phrases' from which anyone could draw.*"[21] Another of Ratner's students, Wye Jamison Allanbrook, has associated these figures with the "*commonplaces*" in rhetoric, such as found in Aristotle's *Topica*, which is a "*collection of general arguments which a rhetorician might consult for help in treating a particular theme.*"[22]

Allanbrook's 1983 *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart* contains a very valuable exploration of dance patterns in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, but the analytical usefulness of this perspective is less clear with untexted music. In examining the exposition of the first movement of Mozart's Sonata in F Major, K. 332, Allanbrook finds "*four measures in a simple singing style*," followed by "*a four-measure parody of learned counterpoint*," "*ten measures of hunt calls*," and "*a passage in Sturm und Drang style.*" The move to the dominant is confirmed by a "*bright and symmetrical minuet tune*," which is however "*interrupted momentarily by a Sturm und Drang parenthesis*," before returning to close the exposition.[23] Allanbrook finds "*no aspirations to actual narrative*" in the sequence of topics; it is simply "*a miniature theater of human gestures and actions*," in which each topic has "*an implicit connection with an ordinary human posture.*"[24]

Indeed, the rapid alternation of musical gestures described by Allanbrook may suggest an idiom that was *opposed* to the ordered sequence of thoughts found in formal eloquence. In *Le Neveu de Rameau*, for example, Diderot contrasts the energetic, unmannered, and realistic "*nouveau style*" of music with the polished phrases of Quinault, La Motte, and Fontenelle: "*Or n'allez pas croire que le jeu des acteurs de*

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[19] Leonard G. Ratner: *Classical Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, New York 1980, p. 9.
[20] Leonard G. Ratner: *Topical Content in Mozart's Keyboard Sonatas*, in: Early Music 19 (1991), p. 615.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Wye Jamison Allanbrook: *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: "Le nozze di Figaro" and "Don Giovanni,"* Chicago 1983, p. 329.
[23] Ibid., p. 6-7.
[24] Ibid., p. 8 and 6.

théâtre et leur déclamation puissent nous servir de modèles. Fi donc! il nous le faut plus énergique, moins maniéré, plus vrai."[25] By the 1760s, following the Querelle des Bouffons, the oratorical style – "*sans en excepter celui de Démosthène*" – had become entirely useless to the composer; the fictional nephew flatly states that "*c'est qu'il n'y a rien là qui puisse servir de modèle au chant.*"[26] Instead, "*il nous faut des exclamations, des interjections, des suspensions, des interruptions, des affirmations, des négations; nous appelons, nous invoquons, nous crions, nous gémissions, nous pleurons, nous rions franchement.*"[27] This all seems compatible with Allanbrook's description of Mozart's music as "*a miniature theater of human gestures and actions,*" but Diderot clearly regards the seemingly chaotic sequences of the modern style as antithetical to the calculated invocations of topics found in formal rhetoric.

The lack of any logical progression leads Ratner to propose that the investigation of musical topics might be more useful to performers than to analysts,[28] and Kofi Agawu suggests that they "*point to the expressive domain, but they have no syntax.*"[29] Agawu's concepts of structure seems indebted to a view expressed in Ratner's "*Texture, A Rhetorical Element in Beethoven's Quartets*" of 1980. Here the beginning and end – where the ruling key is established and confirmed – are seen to be the most critical points in the sonata form. Another important juncture is the close of the exposition, which "*creates the harmonic profile of sonata form*" by temporarily confirming a foreign key. According to Ratner, "*in rhetoric, these points would represent 1. exposition or exordium, 2. contrast or confutatio, 3. confirmation or peroratio.*" Once again, Mattheson's discussion of the oration in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* is cited as the authority this observation,[30] and, like so many other scholars, Ratner reduces Mattheson's six parts to three. (There is no explanation for the omission of the remaining sections.) Ratner uses the rhetorical concepts with great freedom,[31] and Agawu's subsequent formulations attempt to extend Ratner's ideas and to establish a more systematic basis for the use of vocabulary drawn from oratory.

Whereas many rhetorical analyses focus on sonata procedures, Elaine Sisman's 1993 *Haydn and the Classical Variation* examines variation movements ranging from Haydn's "*Il maestro e lo scolare*" to the finale of Beethoven's *Eroica*. Sisman sees a number of parallels between musical variations and the domain of rhetoric. For example, the composer of variations shares the rhetorician's concern with "*copious-*

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25 Diderot: *Le Neveu de Rameau*, in: *Œuvres romanesques*, ed. Lucette Perol, Paris 1981, p. 499.
26 Ibid., p. 498.
27 Ibid., p. 499.
28 Ratner, *Topical Content*, p. 616 and p. 619.
29 Agawu, *Playing with Signs*, p. 20.
30 Leonard G. Ratner: *Texture, A Rhetorical Element in Beethoven's Quartets*, in: Israel Studies in Musicology 2 (1980), p. 52-53.
31 Ratner sometimes applies the terms to events of the length of a movement and, at other times, to a melodic section. Thus Ratner applies the term "peroration" to both the coda to the finale of Beethoven's String Quartet in C Major, Op. 59 No. 3, as well as confirmation of C major that appears in measure 47 (Texture, p. 60-61). This change of hierarchical levels, of course, has no precedent in classical oratory – a speech can be said to have a *peroratio* and a conclusion, but a sentence cannot have both without using the rhetorical term with great license.

ness," which Sisman illustrates by citing Erasmus's 150 variations on the phrase "*Your letter pleased me mightily*" and his 200 ways of saying "*I will remember you as long as I live.*"

Sisman quotes extensively from past writings on oratory and, like the other authors examined above, argues that an early training in eloquence influenced how Haydn and other composers organized their material. The evidence of this influence is highly conjectural, but Sisman asserts that "*the reason composers did not leave documentation about their own use of rhetoric is that it was completely assimilated and natural.*"[32] She finds, however, that Haydn's autobiographical sketch of 1776 follows the plan of the six-part oration: it contains an *exordium* exhibiting great humility, a *narratio* recounting his life, a *corroboratio* giving evidence of his productivity by listing compositions, a *confutatio* in which he addresses his critics in Berlin, and a polite *peroratio* designed to reveal his good qualities.[33] Sisman similarly analyzes Mozart's letters to Michael Puchberg, in which the composer begs for loans, and she finds them also to rely on a rhetorical model.

Once again, however, a concern with the details of the venerable rhetorical structure disappears on the level of the musical composition. Despite the effort expended in demonstrating the presence of the six-part model in Haydn's autobiographical sketch, Sisman suggests that this model is too flexible to be of much analytical significance. She notes that "*with a certain amount of tinkering*" the six-part design may "*be applied to any piece of music of sufficient length to distinguish among the beginning, the middle, and the end.*"[34] Once again, the arrangement of the formal speech is found, at best, to outline a general three-part process.

Because Sisman does not consider the six-part design a compelling model for musical analysis, she turns to the definition of "*refining*" (*expolitio*) in the *Ad Herennium* long believed to be by Cicero. Sisman finds it "*tempting to compare*" the speech illustrating "*refining*" to Mozart's procedures in the replacement finale (K. 382) written in 1782 for the early D-Major Concerto, K. 175. The movement begins with a ritornello that gives the "*theme expressed simply.*" Next the soloist enters, presenting the "*theme stated in a new form (piano solo).*" The orchestra then restates the ritornello, after which the piano offers "*arguments from Comparison (Setzmanieren becoming more brilliant as note values decrease).*" The orchestra again restates the ritornello, after which the piano presents arguments "*from Contrary*" with "*contrasting affective variations,*" including a *minore*, a scherzando, and an Adagio. The orchestral ritornello now returns in triple meter, leading to a variation with the piano, and a return to

[32]   Elaine R. Sisman: *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, Cambridge, Mass., 1993, p. 25.

[33]   Certain difficulties with Sisman's reading of this sketch are proposed in Peter A. Hoyt: *Haydn's New Incoherence*, review of James Webster, *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music*, Cambridge 1991; Gretchen A. Wheelock: *Haydn's ingenious Jesting with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor*, New York 1992; Elaine R. Sisman: *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, Cambridge, Mass., 1993; Ethan Haimo: *Haydn's Symphonic Forms: Essays in Compositional Logic*, in: Music Theory Spectrum 19 (1997), p. 280.

[34]   Sisman: *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, p. 39.

the original meter and tempo for a final ritornello, combining all the instruments. Sisman calls this an argument from "*Example*."

It is not clear why the section in triple time is considered an argument from "*Example*" rather than, say, "*Comparison*": *exemplum*, according to the author of the *Ad Herennium*, "*is the citing of something done or said in the past, along with the definite naming of the doer or author*."[35] It therefore would seem to have little application to music, unless a previous composition is quoted. Moreover, there is nothing in the model for "*refining*" that is equivalent to the ritornello in Mozart's K. 382. Sisman says that "*the frequent returns of the ritornello help to delineate the arguments, while at the same time dwelling on the point*."[36]

But "*dwelling on the point*," or commoratio, is precisely the opposite of the intermittent appearance and disappearance of the orchestral ritornello. In rhetoric, this figure (known in Aristotle as διατρῐβη ["diatribē"]) is characterized by the *exclusion* of digressions, and is valuable because "*no opportunity is given the hearer to remove his attention from this strongest topic*."[37] An entire set of variations might plausibly be considered to exemplify *commoratio*, but it seems unlikely that a ritornello structure would qualify. And while Sisman is certainly correct to note that the ritornello functions to punctuate the solo sections, this is nevertheless a function *not* derived from rhetoric, where such literal returns of material are discouraged in the strongest terms. The unaltered restatements of the ritornello, of course, invoke a long-standing *musical* convention, and the precedence Mozart gives to a conventional musical practice points to a serious problem in recent analytical applications of rhetorical concepts.

It is now presumed that, in the eighteenth century, rhetoric was a preeminent intellectual field, and that – by the force of their respected place in the academic tradition – its concepts would naturally encroach upon musical thought.[38] But in constructing their metaphors, virtually all writers on music were willing to adapt ancient rhetorical concepts in order to accommodate the conventional elements of musical structure. These changes suggest that rhetoric, rather than occupying a position of intellectual dominance, could actually be treated with *less* respect than music. Indeed, the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment was opposed to rhetoric's appeal to the irrational emotions, and the art of eloquence came under severe criticism throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[39] As suggested in the passages from Diderot quoted above, artistic movements that sought to depict heightened emotional states also turned away from formal rhetoric and its traditions.

[35] [Pseudo-Cicero]: [*Rhetorica*] *Ad Herennium*, trans. and ed. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library vol. 403 [Cicero vol. I], Cambridge, Mass., 1954, p. 383.

[36] Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, p. 43.

[37] [Pseudo-Cicero], *Ad Herennium*, p. 375. On the diatribe, see also Aristotle: *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. and ed. George A. Kennedy, Oxford 1991, p. 275.

[38] See, for example, Ratner's reference to music as parasitic on the "host" provided by word and gesture (*Topical Content*, p. 615).

[39] See, for example, the discussion of English scientific discourse in the Royal Society in Wilbur Samuel Howell: *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700*, Princeton 1956, p. 388-90.

Moreover, there is little to support the modern presumption that eighteenth-century composers were so comprehensively trained in classical eloquence that their musical designs were necessarily affected. It is often assumed, for example, that Johann Sebastian Bach was thoroughly indoctrinated in rhetoric at the Lüneburg Lateinschule. According to Arno Forchert, however, this training consisted of memorizing lists of terms rather than an immersion in subtleties.[40] For this (and other) reasons, Bach scholars such as Christoph Wolff and Laurence Dreyfus now regard Quintilian as an unlikely model for the *Musical Offering*, despite the resourceful study of Ursula Kirkendale that inspired much of the recent interest in rhetoric.[41] And because Haydn's and Mozart's educations were, if anything, less systematic than Bach's, analyses requiring a detailed application of rhetorical models to their music face severe challenges.

Such a strict application, as noted earlier, is not characteristic of most current scholarship, but an exception is found in a recent essay by Tom Beghin entitled *"Haydn as Orator: A Rhetorical Analysis of His Keyboard Sonata in D Major, Hob.XVI:42"*. Beghin interprets the two movements of Haydn's sonata as *together* exemplifying a complete oration: the first movement simultaneously presents an *exordium* and a *propositio*. The central proposition here, according to Beghin, concerns a nicety of voice-leading: in D major, an F# moving up to a neighbor-note G must resolve back down to F#.[42] The variations of the first movement test this proposition and constitute a *probatio*. The second movement begins with a *refutatio*, in which the G natural – instead of resolving down to a F# – proceeds up through G# to A natural. Beghin characterizes this motion in the opening period as *"outrageously 'wrong'"* and explains it as *"not the orator's words but his opponent's."*[43] Haydn, it seems, here presents a musical gesture that will later be repudiated. The *"proper"* neighbor-note motion is eventually restored and is reasserted in the *peroratio*.[44]

Beghin uses a voice-leading analysis based on Schenkerian techniques to discover the various syllogisms in this sonata, many of which appear only in the middleground. The subject of the discourse is far removed from the melodic surface (the all-important F#-G-F# motion first appears in a middle voice) and, at times, even contra-

[40] Arno Forchert: *Bach und die Tradition der Rhetorik*, in: Alte Musik als ästhetische Gegenwart: Bach, Händel, Schütz: Bericht über den internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongreß Stuttgart 1985, 2 vols., ed. Dietrich Berke u. Dorothee Hanemann, vol. 1, Kassel 1987, p. 169-177.

[41] Ursula Kirkendale: *The Source for Bach's Musical Offering*, in: Journal of the American Musicological Society 33 (1980), p. 88-141. Dreyfus (*Patterns of Invention*, 248) considers Kirkendale *"effectively refuted by Christoph Wolff."* In particular, Wolff notes that, *"in comparison with Quintilian's model of rhetorical speech, the movements of Bach's composition completely distort the proportions of the section sizes of an oration. ... Moreover, Bach's weightiest pieces (the two ricercari and the sonata) do not at all properly correspond to their alleged function within Quintilian's rhetorical scheme. Finally, a double peroration is quite an absurdity in general."* See Christoph Wolff: *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, p. 421-22.

[42] Tom Beghin: *Haydn as Orator: A Rhetorical Analysis of His Keyboard Sonata in D Major, Hob.XVI:42*, in: Haydn and His World, ed. Elaine Sisman. Princeton 1997, p. 226 and p. 235.

[43] Ibid., p. 230 (emphasis in the original).

[44] Ibid., pp. 241-42.

dicted by it: in the *refutatio* that begins the second movement, the G natural actually *does* proceed "*properly*" down to an F# within the first measure; it is only over a larger span, and through a transfer of register, that the initial G appears to move up through G# to the A in measure 4. In placing the "*proposition*" and the arguments in such obscure positions, one wonders whether Haydn would be violating the directive – found in virtually every manual on rhetoric – to state the subject of the speech with absolute clarity.

Beghin's analysis reflects the interest in *verborgene Wiederholung* that characterizes much analytical work in the American academy. Schenker was quite concerned with concealed repetitions, which have been called "*the hallmark of his view of thematic content.*"[45] In searching for such labyrinthine procedures, some analysts overlook thematic processes closer to the surface of the composition. Similarly, the common view of eighteenth-century sonata form as a harmonic pattern – a view much influenced by Ratner's research into Classical music theory – also tends to emphasize tonal articulations instead of melodic events.

The problematic status of "themes" in much recent theoretical work may explain why some scholars are now interested in new interpretative approaches, particularly those that might allow for the study of thematic processes that appear close to the musical surface. Bonds specifically offers his own work as an alternative to Ratner's perspective. Similarly, Sisman uses oratory to counter the emphasis currently placed on large-scale tonal architecture, which often leads theorists to denigrate the variation form, or to analyze it as a disguised sonata design.

But if some of the current interest in rhetoric stems from a dissatisfaction with prevailing analytic methodologies, theorists such as Agawu and Beghin have had little trouble enlisting rhetoric in *support* of these methodologies. As seen above, Agawu draws parallels between the forms prescribed by oratory and the Schenkerian *Ursatz*, and he thereby asserts a historical foundation for a theory often accused of anachronism. Similarly, the "*topics*" discussed by Agawu, Allanbrook, and Ratner often reinforce the importance now placed on harmonic architecture;[46] because the topics typically fail to exhibit any sort of logical sequence, they frequently serve merely (as Ratner says) to "*add a final touch of imagery to the coherence and design of tonal patterns.*"[47] In comparing the work of these authors, it appears that rhetoric can be used either to attack or to support current analytical paradigms.

It seems that contemporary invocations of classical rhetoric are often themselves rhetorical – that is, they are gestures designed to make other arguments more attractive and persuasive. As a supplemental component of an interpretation, the appeal to the *ars oratoria* may ultimately prove unnecessary when the interpretation itself proves particularly convincing. Perhaps the clearest demonstration of this is found in

[45] John Rothgeb: *Thematic Content: A Schenkerian View*, in: Aspects of Schenkerian Theory, ed. David Beach, New Haven 1983, p. 40.

[46] See, for example, Allanbrook's statement that sonata form is a "*misnomer*," because the "*'form' is actually a harmonic process, involving in essence a move from a well-established home key to its opposite pole, the dominant, and back again*" (*Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, pp. 340-1).

[47] Ratner, *Topical Content*, p. 619.

Elaine Sisman's "*Form, Character, and Genre in Mozart's Piano Concerto Variations*," an essay published in 1996. Here Sisman again examines the ritornello structure of Mozart's K. 382, but she does not relate the work to pseudo-Cicero's *Ad Herennium*. That portion of her earlier discussion falls away.[48] In many of the writings discussed above, the concepts of rhetoric seems auxiliary to a number of other – often extremely valuable – observations.

Perhaps this condition permits a parallel to be drawn between the modern interest in the metaphor of the musical oration and the writings of Mattheson and Forkel. For a variety of reasons,[49] both eighteenth- and twentieth-century authors have wished to align themselves with the procedures and the intellectual authority of the art of eloquence. Neither group, however, feels compelled to adhere to its strictures with any great deal of fidelity – rhetorical precepts may be selectively incorporated or overlooked, depending on the needs of the moment. These needs have changed greatly since the eighteenth century, but it is clear that much of the recent interest in rhetoric reflects the condition of analytical theory in the American academy, not from any close correspondence between the music of the Classical period and the linguistic ideals of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.

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48   Elaine Sisman: *Form, Character, and Genre in Mozart's Piano Concerto Variations*, in: Mozart's Piano Concertos: Text, Context, Interpretation, ed. Neal Zaslaw, Ann Arbor, 1996, pp. 336-39.

49   These reasons are explored in Peter A. Hoyt: *Acts of Homage and Betrayal: The Citation of Classical Rhetoric in Eighteenth-Century Accounts of Musical Form*, a paper read at the combined Annual Meetings of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory, New York City 1995.

Patrick McCreless

Semiotics and Music: An End-of-Century Overview

The title of a popular recent book published in the United States makes no secret of
its scorn for psychotherapy: *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy – and the
World Is Getting Worse* (Ventura and Hillman 1993). Having weighed the Freudian
and post-Freudian project of psychotherapy in the balance of the social good that they
see it as having accomplished, the authors find it wanting; they deem us no better off
for its having been around for a hundred years. Charles Sanford Peirce's *semiotics* and
Ferdinand de Saussure's *semiology* were both born of exactly the same modernist im-
pulse, around the turn of the twentieth century, that spawned psychoanalysis and a
host of other intellectual and artistic movements. So we might ask the same question
of semiotics that the recent book asks of psychotherapy: is the world a better place for
being able to interpret itself semiotically? Has scholarship produced understanding
and insights that would not have been produced without semiotics? More specifically,
what have we, as musicians and musical scholars, gained from the semiotic approach
to music? What are its accomplishments? What issues has it raised, and what is cur-
rent thought on those issues? The present paper provides a brief overview of the dis-
cipline of musical semiotics, with a focus at the end on important recent contributions
by Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Kofi Agawu, and Robert Hatten.

Of course, semiotics is not a hundred years old in the same way that psychotherapy
and psychoanalysis are. Freud, it goes without saying, did a better job of putting his
work into final form and getting it into print than did either Peirce or Saussure, both
of whom had to wait for their successors and students to compile and edit their ideas.
What is more, psychotherapy became immediately popular, and it has been develop-
ing steadily as the century has progressed. In contrast, the semiotics of Peirce and the
semiology of Saussure had to lie dormant until the 1960's, when the intellectual cli-
mate was ripe for them; the seeds had been planted fifty years before, but the full
plant had not sprung into view.

There were, of course, many proto-semiotic thinkers before the seminal work of
Peirce and Saussure, the generally acknowledged theoretical founders of the disci-
pline – Peirce from the philosophical side, Saussure from the linguistic side. Histori-
ans of semiotics cite, among others, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, medieval scholas-
tic philosophers, Leibniz, Locke, Condillac, Wolff, Lambert (the first writer to entitle
a treatise *Semiotik*), and Hegel as theorists of the sign. But it was only in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Peirce developed a complex philosophi-
cal theory of signs and signification, and that Saussure, completely independently of
Peirce, developed a theory of language, a central feature of which was the famous dy-
adic relation *signifier/signified.* And it was another fifty years or more before a viable
new discipline of semiotics, forged from strands of Peirce and Saussure, as well as in-
fluences from the American behavioralist Charles Morris, from Russian formalism,

the Prague school of linguistics, French structuralism, Roman Jakobson's theory of communication, and the linguistics of Louis Hjelmslev, could be successfully launched. And not until the 1960's and 1970's did the new discipline come into its own: only then did it become the basis for scholarly societies (e. g., the International Society for Semiotic Studies in 1969, the Semiotic Society of America in 1976), new journals (*Semiotica* [1966], the *Canadian Journal of Research in Semiotics* [1973], *Semiosis* [1976], and the *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* [1979]), and academic conferences (e. g., the First International Congress of Semiotics in Belgrade in 1963, and the first congress of the International Society for Semiotic Studies in 1974). Only then did it take on all the trappings of a vital scholarly discipline.

As the discipline has matured, it has gradually become clear that Peirce's influence has been more lasting than Saussure's. At the most mundane level, Peirce's *semiotics* has for the most part supplanted Saussure's *semiology*.[1] More substantively, Peirce's exhaustively worked out, if also convoluted and often contradictory, philosophical theory has proven to provide a more stable and usable theoretical basis for the discipline than has Saussure's work. For, much as some of Saussure's concepts are indispensable to semiotics – the distinctions synchronic/diachronic, syntagmatic/paradigmatic, and *langue/parole,* and the notion of language as an arbitrary relational system "without positive terms" – his work really does no more than predict the eventual establishment of a "science of signs," and some authorities now consider that his historical role as a founder of semiotics has been overstated (Jakobson 1980, 12; Noth 1990, 63). Saussure's static dyad *signifier/signified* in effect bypasses the human perceiver and makes of the sign a closed binary relation. In contrast, Peirce's dynamic trichotomy *sign-object-interpretant* both includes the human perceiver in the signifying chain and allows for the multiplication of meaning. In Peirce's view, a *sign* and the object for which it stands create in the mind of the observer an *interpretant,* which is itself another sign capable of signifying yet another object and thus creating another interpretant, and so forth through an indeterminate number of stages to a final interpretant.

Not that semiotics in any sense proceeds from a consistent or unified theory. Whatever the seminal contributions of Peirce and Saussure – or, for that matter, of Hjelmslev, Jakobson, Eco, or many others – a semiotic study by no means specifically presupposes a rigorous theoretical grounding in the work of any of these thinkers, at least not in the same way that psychoanalytical studies rely inevitably on Freud, Marxist studies on Marx, or deconstructionist approaches on Derrida. What ties semiological studies together is less a consistent theoretical foundation and programme than a point of view and a praxis: the foregrounding of sign and signification, a faith in the notion of semiosis as an interdisciplinary and even universal path to insight and knowledge, and the appropriation of some theory or methodology of the central fig-

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[1]   At the founding conference of the International Association for Semiotic Studies in 1969, it was decided to abandon the term *semiology* altogether in favor of *semiotics* (see Monelle 1992, 26). Despite this decision, a number of writers, particularly those who, like Jean-Jacques Nattiez, write in French, continue to use *semiology*.

ures of semiotics – even though radically different and indeed contradictory theories are invoked in its name. Practitioners of semiotics do not even agree whether it is a *science,* as imagined by Saussure (*"semiology"* as a science of signs *"that does not yet exist"* [Saussure 1966, 16]) and as founded by Peirce and Charles Morris, a *discipline,* a *method,* or merely a *point of view.*

Uncertainties about its theoretical allegiances or its disciplinary definition have hardly stifled its exuberance, however. The generality of the notion of the sign, and the claim of the theory of the sign to universality – to explaining all aspects of human culture and even of animal signification – promoted the attitude that semiotics could uncover the secret codes of all communication, human and otherwise. For example, Thomas A. Sebeok, a central figure in American semiotics, has written that *„the scope of semiotics encompasses the whole of the o i k o u m e n e, the entirety of our planetary biosphere"* (Sebeok 1977, 181-2). Like other modernist projects, it asserted its ability everywhere to read the truth below the surface, to discern underlying patterns, motives, and conventions not apparent in the signs themselves. Thus Marshall Blonsky, writing in 1985 and looking back over twenty years of semiotic activity, could write of a *"semiotic 'head' or eye,* [that] *sees the world as an immense message, replete with signs that can and do deceive us and lie about the world's condition"* (Blonsky 1985, vii). Sharing with 1960's structuralism a sudden sense of empowerment at the ability to read truth underneath the deceptive surface of the world, and an excitement about applying the methods of structural linguistics and poetics – e. g. Saussure's various binary oppositions; Jakobson's theories of distinctive features and markedness; Propp's structuralist methods of analyzing fairy tales; and Greimas's structuralist semantics – semiotics seemed to offer a new method of analysis and interpretation to individual disciplines, yet at the same time to transcend these disciplines and serve as a universal science. Here was a science, or at least an approach, that could deal with both high art and popular culture, with both Western and non-Western culture, with both text and image, sound and semblance. Hence the missionary zeal, the thrill of *"semiotic omnipotence"* (Sebeok, Foreward to Tarasti 1994, ix), with which semiotics popularized the studies of countless areas of culture beginning in the 1960's: Roland Barthes's studies of fashion, advertising mythology, and much else; Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality; Umberto Eco's general theory of semiotics; and Kaja Silverman's studies of film.

The semiotic project in music began in the 1960's, gained strength in the 1970's and 1980's, and has become a familiar feature on the music-scholarly map in the 1990's. Semiotics has had a significant impact on the ways in which we think about music. It has produced an impressive body of scholarship – countless conference papers, essays, and monographs – and it is well worth a retrospective evaluation here at the turn of the century. I will organize my overview of musical semiotics in two broad gestures: 1) a brief synchronic view of the current status of semiotics in musical research, especially its relation to more mainstream branches of musical scholarship; 2) a more detailed diachronic view of the historical development of musical semiotics from the 1960's to the present, with a focus on how both the scholarly aims and the

theoretical underpinnings of the semiotic enterprise in music have gradually shifted over the course of thirty years.

1. Semiotics and Music after Thirty Years: A View from 1998

In the 1960's and 1970's "the theory of signs" held out the same hope for musical scholarship that structuralism had a decade earlier. Its appeal was interdisciplinary, both in the sense of its being transportable into music from linguistics and literary criticism, and in the sense of its transcending the boundaries that separate the purely musical disciplines (music theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology). Like structuralism, it promised to move freely between Western and non-Western cultures, written and oral traditions, and high-art and popular musical styles. And, also like structuralism, it bore an impressive international cachet: unlike our nationally focussed efforts in the individual disciplines of music, semiotics could legitimately claim to be a genuinely international endeavor. All in all, since music was nothing if not a riot of signs, semiotics seemed a good bet to colonize the disciplines of the analysis, criticism, and interpretation of music.

That this colonization never really happened says much both about semiotics and about the already established disciplines of musical scholarship. What it says about semiotics is, at least in part, that the new discipline, in its musical incarnation as well as in general, was not and is not a monolithic theoretical programme. Rather, as noted above, it is a loosely configured means of approaching signs and signification from a vaguely definable but not rigorously delimited point of view. Eero Tarasti, the eminent Finnish musical semiotician, has called musical semiotics a "*discipline in flux, a science under construction*" (Tarasti 1994, 5). Elsewhere he has written that "*A study may qualify as musical semiotics if any problem related to music, musical concepts, or musical behavior is examined in the spirit of semiotics*" – if it is conducted in a spirit that leads one to say, "*Indeed, this is semiotics!*" (Tarasti 1996, xi-xii). Like the American Supreme Court justice who quipped that he could not define pornography, but could recognize it when he saw it, we are left to judge for ourselves what is and what is not musical semiotics.

This theoretical elusiveness is surely a factor that has kept semiotics from establishing a secure and lasting place in the mainstream of the disciplines of music. Another factor is that, even when the theoretical foundations of semiotic musical studies are explicit, the underlying theories are often either problematic themselves, or of sufficient opacity to keep musical scholars at bay. For example, despite the fame and familiarity of Saussure's distinction *signifier/signified,* this straightforward binary distinction is far too simple to bear much interpretive or critical sophistication. Recently it has given way to the more complex formulations of Peirce and other theorists in semiotic studies in general; musical studies that evoke the Saussurian dyad are easy targets for harsh criticism (see Robert Hatten's reviews [Hatten 1980 and 1992] of Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* [Nattiez 1975a] and Kofi Agawu's *Playing With Signs* [Agawu 1991]). But other semiotic theories that have been appropriated for musical studies – Peirce's classifications of signs and

A. J. Greimas's structural semantics – are turgid and daunting to the degree that few musical scholars have been willing to invest the time necessary to gain fluency with the theories. The semiotic (or linguistic, proto-semiotic) theories that have been the most useful and productive in musical scholarship have been Roman Jakobson's notions of introversive and extroversive semiosis (aptly used in Agawu 1991), his linguistic theory of markedness (brilliantly used in Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* [1994]), and Peirce's relatively simple distinction *icon/index/symbol* (put to productive use in the musical aesthetics of Wilson Coker (1972), and ethnomusicological studies by Steven Feld (1988 and 1990) and Greg Urban (1985 and 1991) – although many European scholars have put Greimas's structural semantics to good use as well.

2. The Semiotics of Music: An Historical Overview

Robert Hatten has added to the familiar distinction semiology/semiotics (which, as we have seen, commonly distinguishes the Saussurian/linguistic from the Peircean/logical side of the discipline; *semiotics* is now generally used for both) the further feature that semiology invokes in general the formalism of French structuralism, while semiotics, with the more ramified Peircean trichotomy, makes room for a hermeneutic component (Hatten 1992, 88). The broad lines of the history of musical semiology/semiotics, from the 1960's to the 1990's, in fact proceed along this axis from the linguistic-formal to the interpretive-hermeneutic.

The earliest attempts at an explicit musical semiology were those of the linguist Nicolas Ruwet in the 1960's. Ruwet's studies of repetition in the works of Debussy (Ruwet 1962) and in medieval monophonic songs (Ruwet 1966) invoke not, as might be expected, the linguistics of Saussure and the Prague School, but distributionalism of the American linguists Leonard Bloomfield and Zellig Harris. Ruwet's "*paradigmatic method*," a purely mechanical means of segmentation intended to reveal the patterning of melodic repetitions, aggressively rejects any consideration of meaning. Rather, it seeks to provide a formal discovery procedure that can produce, merely by the application of a series of segmentation rules, melodic segmentations that would match the immediate intuitive responses of a musician. Ruwet's analyses, and the more musically sophisticated melodic analyses of David Lidov (1979), are characteristic of the earliest stage of musical semiotics, both in their unrelenting formalism and in their ultimately having little impact on the discipline of musical analysis.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez, who by any account should be acknowledged as one of the founders and principal figures of musical semiotics, emerged from the same structuralist tradition as did Ruwet and Lidov. His first major work, *Fondements d'une Sémiologie de la musique* (Nattiez 1975a), takes up and extends the paradigmatic methods of Ruwet. Again, the distributional analyses eschew the issue of musical meaning, and focus on unaccompanied melodies (here is where we find Nattiez's famous analyses of Debussy's *Syrinx;* in the same year he also published an analysis of Varèse's *Density 21.5* (Nattiez 1975b) – harmonic and contrapuntal music still seeming too complex for the structuralist discovery procedures that prevailed at the time. It is also in *Fondements* that Nattiez, following Jean Molino, introduces the *tripartition,* or the conceptualization of the artwork on three levels: the poietic (relat-

ing to the creation or composition of the work), the neutral level (the immanent material trace, such as a score or recording, on which Nattiez's analyses focus), and the esthesic (the level of perception and reception). It is the tripartition, more than his distributional analyses, on which Nattiez's reputation rests, and on which his work after 1975 explicitly depends.

It was in the late 1970's and early 1980's that musical semiotics began to transform itself from linguistic-formal enterprise to a interpretive-hermeneutic one. As early as 1977, Nattiez himself was proclaiming that semiotics must split off from its linguistic roots: "*Today the divorce between linguistics and semiotics is consummated*" (Nattiez 1977, 131). The shift of focus is evident, for example, in Eero Tarasti's first major work, *Myth and Music* (Tarasti 1979). Here the motivating impulse is expressly structuralist and linguistic (Tarasti's point of departure is Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology of myth), but the result bespeaks a new direction. Now the goal is not just the revealing of segmentation and pattern, but also interpretation and the discovery of *meaning.* Significantly, as the book progresses, its theoretical support shifts from Lévi-Strauss to the structuralist semantics of Greimas – still structuralist, but now with a concern for interpretation. And with the expanded analytic intent comes a concominant broadening of focus: now the analytical objects are not just unaccompanied melodies, but major works – Wagner's *Ring,* Sibelius's *Kullervo* Symphony, and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex.* Tarasti's swerve toward interpretation and meaning, and toward the consideration of more complex musical works, was soon followed by other semioticians.

By the mid-to late 1980's and the 1990's the "paradigmatic method" in musical semiotics seemed as though it was in the distant past, and the concern for the interpretation of musical meaning dominated semiotic work on both sides of the Atlantic. Tarasti edited three collections of essays (Tarasti 1987, 1995, 1996), and published numerous essays of his own, as well as an interpretively oriented Peircean/Greimasian *Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Tarasti 1994). At the same time a number of central European scholars adopted a semiotic approach to musical meaning – again, frequently based on the Peircean notion of icon/index/symbol and on Greimasian structural semantics. In 1986 the young Hungarian scholar Marta Grabòcz published her Greimas-based *Morphologie des oeuvres pour piano de Liszt* (Grabòcz 1986; see also her work on electroacoustic music in Grabòcz 1995 and 1996). Other important interpretive contributions have come from Jaroslav Jiránek (1985) in Prague and Vladimir Karbusicky in Hamburg (Karbusicky 1986, 1987a, 1987b). In English-speaking countries, an early semiotically oriented attempt at a theory of musical meaning – one that invoked the Peircean theory of the sign – was Wilson Coker's *Music and Meaning* (Coker 1972). A decade later, David Lidov (1981) turned from his earlier distributionalist work to consider the semantics of the Allegretto of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. The Edinburgh theorist Raymond Monelle published a series of insightful essays on musical semantics and semiotics (Monelle 1991a, 1991b, 1991c), as well as a useful monograph, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Monelle 1992). In the United States the American theorist Robert Hatten began a series of sensitive essays using a semiotic approach to musical meaning and expression (Hatten 1987a, 1987b,

and 1991), culminating in his widely read monograph *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Hatten 1994; see below).

An understanding of the status of musical semiotics in the United States requires an appreciation of American traditions and institutions of musical scholarship. Since the founding of the Society for Music Theory in 1977, American musical scholarship has been divided into three principal societies – the Society for Music Theory (SMT), the American Musicological Society (AMS), and the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) – each of which has its own scholarly conferences (though the SMT and AMS meet together frequently). Although no generalization is entirely accurate, it was fundamentally the case that until the late 1980's both the SMT and AMS were strongly committed to more or less positivist agendas – formalist analysis (Schenkerian theory and pitch-class set theory especially) for the theorists, documentary studies of various sorts for the musicologists – while the SEM in the same period turned gradually from linguistics- and transcription-based studies to ethnography and social anthropology. A watershed in American music theory and historical musicology began to take place in the 1980's, in response to the call of Joseph Kerman (Kerman 1980 and 1985) for a more humanistically and critically oriented American musical scholarship. In the late 1980's, partially in response to Kerman, a new generation of musicologists, armed with a variety of critical theories (from Adorno to Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, de Man, and Eagleton), took aim at the entrenched positivism on both sides of the theory/musicology divide. The so-called New Musicology that emerged from this movement, and that is now much closer to the center of American musicology, is fiercely anti-formalist and post-structuralist, socially more than analytically engaged, and postmodern rather than modern in philosophical orientation.

How musical semiotics fits into this picture is as follows. Before 1990, despite the inroads that semiotics had made into American literary criticism and other academic disciplines, only a few American musical scholars had adopted an explicitly semiotic approach, and most of those were ethnomusicologists (see, for example, the studies of iconicity by Becker and Becker 1981, and Feld 1988; and the discourse-centered Peircean perspective of Urban 1985) – the principal exceptions being some of the early essays of Robert Hatten. It might be expected that such a combination of semiotic vacuum and disciplinary flux would provide the perfect opportunity for musical semiotics to stake a strong claim for a place in American musical scholarship. But at the same time, one would hardly expect a music-scholarly world headed in the direction of postmodernism to adopt semiotics, the quintessential offspring of structuralism.

What happened was that semiotics did indeed break dramatically into American music theory and musicology in the late 1980's and early 1990's, but in a way that placed it in an idiosyncratic position with respect to the structuralist/post-structuralist divide, and in a way that has yet, thus far at least, to bring semiotics successfully into the mainstream of these disciplines. Three influential, though utterly different books based on semiotic theory appeared in the United States at this time: the English translation of Nattiez 1987 as *Music and Discourse* (1990), Agawu's *Playing with Signs* (1991), and Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* (1994). The three books differ radically in both their theoretical foundations and in their objects of study.

Nattiez's book is by far the most eclectic and wide ranging. In it he offers, twelve years after *Fondements,* a rethought and reconstituted general semiology (unlike most writers, he continues to prefer *semiology* to *semiotics*) of music. The present volume only establishes the theory of the new semiology, which future volumes will then flesh out with actual analyses. Nattiez remains the strongest representative of the old structuralism among the three authors. A new and explicit Peircean orientation (the trichotomy of signs and the centrality of the interpretant), completely absent from *Fondements,* might at first glance suggest a loosening of the structuralist hold on Nattiez's work. His emphasis on the multiplicity of interpretants (a sign-object relation produces an interpretant which is itself a sign, which can produce yet another sign, and so forth) might even hint at a semiotic perspective that is compatible with the profusion of meaning characteristic of poststructuralism. (However, as Hatten [1992, 94] points out in his review, Nattiez fails to mention the Peircean concept of the *final* interpretant; meaning is not infinitely deferable.) But we should not be deceived: Molino's tripartition is still present – indeed, it is the central concept that drives the book – and Nattiez is much exercised to defend the neutral level as a stable, immanent focus of analysis. This commitment to the neutral level coexists uncomfortably with the explicit philosophical opening up of meaning that interests him so in Peirce.[2] Furthermore, the only analyses that he promises for future volumes are *paradigmatic* analyses (Nattiez 1990, 87); despite a whole chapter entitled "*Musical Meaning: The Symbolic Web*," the question of addressing real meaning in real music seems strangely absent – particularly from the book's one extended analysis, which is yet another rethinking of the Tristan chord. Yet he promises a method that can deal with all the world's music, and we can only wait expectantly to see what shape the analytical volumes will take.

Agawu's volume, in contrast, deals exclusively with the music of a single style of Western art music: the Classic style of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And, unlike Nattiez's book, Agawu's is primarily analytical: a minimum of theory supports a maximum of analysis, rather than vice versa. Agawu, following Allan Keiler (Keiler 1981), invokes the same distinction that I have made here regarding the two streams of music-semiotic thought – what I have referred to as linguistic-formal and interpretive-hermeneutic, respectively, he calls *taxonomic-empirical* and *semantic* – and he places himself firmly on the side of the latter. The theory that supports his analyses rests fundamentally on the following, in order of importance: 1) Jakobson's distinction of introversive and extroversive meaning (later adapted by Coker [1972] as *congeneric* and *extrageneric* meaning); 2) Leonard Ratner's classification of "*topics*" in late eighteenth-century music; 3) a binary, Saussurian, more than a Peircean, concept of the sign, along with Saussure's *langue/parole,* diachronic/synchronic, and syntagmatic/paradigmatic distinctions; 4) the simple beginning-middle-end paradigm

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[2] Nattiez's preference for fixed, as opposed to infinitely deferable meaning appears even more strongly in his *Wagner Androgyne* (Nattiez 1993), the last third of which constitutes an attack on a variety of intellectual and musical theories and approaches that do not rigorously delimit allowable interpretations of meaning.

from Johann Mattheson's eighteenth-century concept of musical rhetoric; and 5) Schenkerian tonal theory. These strands of theory Agawu forges together in a way that homes in on musical meaning by investigating the "*play*" (hence the title) between tonal structure and topic, and between introversive and extroversive semiosis, in an illuminating series of examples that includes Mozart's String Quintets in C Major and D Major, K. 515 and 593, Haydn's String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 76, No. 2, and Beethoven's String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132.

Hatten's monograph narrows the object of study even further. From Nattiez's encompassing of the whole world of music, to Agawu's consideration of the Classical style, Hatten moves to a detailed study of expressive meaning in the music of Beethoven – especially the late piano sonatas. His semiotic theory is the most focused and most closely reasoned in the three books. Taking as his point of departure the Jakobsonian theory of markedness, especially as interpreted by the American semiotician and linguist Michael Shapiro, and the notion of expressive topics and genres in the Classic style, Hatten develops a hermeneutics of Beethoven's music that proceeds fundamentally from a recognition of the asymmetry of unmarked and marked elements in the style. Thus, as Charles Rosen has pointed out, the major mode and the comic style are the default or unmarked category for the music of the late eighteenth century, while the minor mode and tragic style are marked. By refining this simple relation with other distinctions, such as high and low style, and historical or current style, Hatten gradually constructs a theory of expressive genres for the period. Then, elaborating these distinctions with others derived from Ratner's topics, and with further distinctions from semiotic and literary theory (Peirce's type/token dyad, concepts of irony and metaphor, and Hatten's own reading of troping, which he sees as a kind of "*creative growth*" of topical references beyond their conventional or typical usage, to the point where they may begin to represent a certain expressive emplotment), he builds a theoretical edifice capable of handling the complex expressivity of Beethoven's works with impressive sophistication and sensitivity.

For better or worse, even though these three formidable publications have brought musical semiotics into the limelight of American scholarship and have had considerable influence (both Agawu's and Hatten's books have won awards from the Society for Music Theory), they have done little to bring semiotics into the music-scholarly mainstream. Perhaps it was too late for either a "science" or an interpretive tool, for "taxonomic empiricism" or "semanticism," to take over disciplines already firmly grounded in their own strong traditions. Perhaps also it is ultimately the structuralist connections of semiotics that have prevented it from being a major player in the new, poststructuralist disciplinary paradigms that have emerged in the past decade. These new paradigms arose precisely because the formalism and positivism of Anglo-American music theory and musicology had not opened themselves up to the search for musical and expressive meaning – to the goals of Kerman's "criticism" or to hermeneutics and interpretation. The greatest irony of the success of Agawu's and Hatten's books is surely that, despite their structuralist theoretical supports (Jakobson, Saussure, and Schenker for Agawu; Jakobson, Peirce, and Shapiro for Hatten), they now can be seen as central statements in the flood of publications in the years

1984-1995 (for example, Newcomb 1984 and 1987, Kramer 1984 and 1990, and Abbate 1991), that broke the chains of formalism and that made it once again respectable to write about expressive meaning, and desirable to write about social and political meaning, in musical scholarship. Perhaps then, these semiotic works, with whatever structuralist trappings they carry with them, have performed for American music theory and musicology the same thing that Steven Feld and Aaron Fox have claimed that structuralism did for ethnomusicology: *"Ironically, when all is said and sung, it was the structuralist tradition that made anthropology and linguistics pay attention to the social immanence of music's supreme mystery, the grooving redundancy of elegant structuring that affectively connects the singularity of form to the multiplicity of sense"* (Feld and Fox 1994: 43-44).

Ultimately, then, when we look back over the past hundred years of semiotic theory and activity, and the past thirty years of musical semiotics, what have the world in general, and the musical world in particular, gained that they did not have before the development of semiotics? Like psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, semiotics arose from a totalizing modernist instinct to understand and theorize human existence, behavior, and signification. Whatever we think of psychotherapy, and whatever we think of semiotics, they both have stimulated us to theorize signification and meaning for a century, and semiotics has, over the past half century, provided a vital model of how structuralist and hermeneutic thinking can interact. And musical semiotics has served us both as a stimulus and as a conduit for our thinking about the fundamental questions of how music is organized, and how it takes on meaning.

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Thomas Christensen

Narrative Theory and Music Analysis

Narration constitutes one of the newest – at the same time one of the oldest – modes of music analysis. Strictly speaking, the field of narrative theory – or "narratology" as Tzvetan Todorov inelegantly named it – is a relatively recent sub-discipline of literary structuralism, whose scholarly origin may be traced back to early 20th-century Russian formalists such as Victor Shklovsky and Vladimir Propp, although only fully developed by French structuralists in the 1960s such as Roland Barthes and Claude Levi-Strauss.[1] And it has been only in the last twenty years or so that a few intrepid musicologists, primarily American, have attempted to apply some of the concepts of narrative theory to music analysis, particularly in regard to questions of order and form. Yet, from a broader point of view, questions of narrative and music have a far longer genealogy, if under the rubric of musical narrative we could include questions such as: can music tell stories, convey drama, or depict characters? Indeed, it is precisely the fact that there is such a long hermeneutic tradition in conceiving musical pieces as having kinds of programmatic or affective content that narratology has found such a receptive audience among music theorists. Narrative theory seems to offer a potentially rich means of mediating our aesthetic intuitions about music's mimetic and diegetic capacities between our more technical concerns about autonomous tonal processes and structures.

As a formal discipline of literary studies, narratology seeks to analyze narrative conventions and plot structures underlying literary texts. In this sense, narratology is closely related to the work of structural semiotics. The focus, in other words, is not so much upon the particular semantic content of some text (the specific "story" it tells), rather on the common paratactic structures it exemplifies – or as Saussure would put it, its l a n g u e rather than its p a r o l e . Roland Barthes thought of narrative theory as essentially large-scale semiology. Whereas traditional semiotics can be said to concern itself with localized questions relating to the signifying codes of words, phrases or sentences, narrative theory could be said to project these concerns onto a larger syntagmatic scale: the rules, conventions, and codes by which whole sentences, paragraphs, and chapters might be strung together to constitute a "plot" expressed in a wide variety of possible genres: the novel, film, ballad, biography, drama, diary, news report, and so forth. Structural narratology, in other words, constitutes a theory of the overall pattern of subjects and events in any given story. So, in Vladimir Propp's famous study, the *Morphology of the Folktale* first published in 1928, we find analyzed a small number of archetypical characters that populate any given Russian folktale (the hero, villain, princess, magician, dragon, etc.) and then 31 possible "functions" that exhaustively account for

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[1] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, tr. Laurence Scott (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1958). Also see Roland Barthes, *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, in: Image, Music, Text, tr. Stephen Heath, New York 1977.

the relation, situation, and behavior of any of these characters in the story, by which a structural grammar of fairytales could be deduced.

An obviously simple (although ubiquitous) structural plot of a fairytale, then, would be one in which a hero is tricked by a knavish villain to leave his family, engage in some agonistic struggle with evil, vanquish the evil, return home victoriously to his family and be united in marriage with his beloved. Propp's structuralist theory is able to sort out both the syntagmatic as well as paradigmatic elements of a story, showing that certain syntagmas of plot structure underlie a diverse number of narrated stories. Conversely, it can show how a finite number of stereotyped characters and events can be paradigmatically plotted in various configurations over the course of a story.[2]

While I am aware of no musicologist who has ever attempted to appropriate the full structuralist apparatus and terminology of narrative theory (concepts such as cardinal and catalytic functions, actantial models, action sequences, indices, or proairetic codes) in order to parse and taxonomize some musical piece, a number have found the general analytic insights of narrative theory to be of value in considering strategies of tonal form. Most conspicuously, classical sonata-allegro form seems to mimic the kind of heroic epic of Propp's narrative paradigm: A given theme (and key area) is presented, which is then countered and temporarily subverted by a secondary theme in a different key area (most likely the dominant). A struggle ensues in which both thematic material and key orientations are destabilized and fragmented, but ultimately resolved by the triumphant return of the original theme in its home key and the subduing of the rebellious secondary theme by its restatement in the now-all-powerful tonic key.

This is, of course, not a particularly sophisticated reading of sonata form. And indeed, in many cases, it would be a mistaken one. But I use it to illustrate the obvious point that musical forms, like novels and fairytales, often seem to fall into common archetypical patterns that can be plotted out as exempla of narrative forms. It can be seen, then, how narratology is a structuralist twin to classical semiology: Both seek to uncover deep-rooted archetypes of structure in any "text" – whether verbal or musical. The difference would be that in a musical work, narrativity would privilege a large-scale linear diachronic reading – the particular tonal and formal ordering of events – while semiotics would tend to privilege a more localized, atemporal synchronic reading which would probably involve the identification and isolation of particular motivic cells and rhythmic gestures.

But if all that narratology offered us was an inventory of archetypical formal structures in tonal music, would we even have to bother with it? The basic *Formenlehre* of someone like A. B. Marx from the middle of the 19th century already claims to do just this. In a quite different way, Schenker's theory, too, seems to offer a satisfying account of tonal structure and event succession on differing "levels" of temporal distance that has earned wide-spread allegiance among many Anglo-American musicologists. On the other hand, if narrative theory offers us a window by which to plot out some "story" in a musical composition with affective, expressive content, again such claims would not be

2 See Gerald Prince: *Narratology*, in: The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 8, ed. Raman Selden, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 112-14.

new ones. Throughout the 19th century, we find a long tradition of hermeneutic criticism in which musical compositions were interpreted as possessing programmatic content. While the specific poetic stories and affective characterizations that writers such as (again) A. B. Marx, A. D. Ulibishev, Hermann Kretzschmar, and Arnold Schering provide for canonical instrumental compositions are ones that may sound amusingly quaint today (such as reading Beethoven's *Eroica* as a Napoleonic epic or a Homeric Odyssey), each critic was certainly able to intuit and convey in their prose a narrative dynamic and expressive content to the music.[3]

Of course, a common objection to such hermeneutic exegesis is that it remains hopelessly subjective and impressionistic. What a more sophisticated invocation of narrative theory promises us is a means of reconciling these two traditions of criticism, of retaining the empirical rigor of formal analysis, but infused with the expressive, dramatic content so many generations of listeners have claimed to hear in music. While no proponents of structural narrative theory would probably advocate the writing of "hidden programs" that lie behind a given composition, they would agree that narratology offers a means of elucidating empirically a dramatic, expressive quality to the musical experience that is too often shut out of more conventional formalist analysis.

There are a number of ways narratology might be adapted to effect this synthesis.[4] Anthony Newcomb, for example, agrees that the analogy between musical form and narrative in literature is valid. "*First, the two represent similar things, in that both can be thought of as a series of functional events in a prescribed order. Secondly, both are critically or theoretically derived in the same fashion.*"[5] From here, Newcomb goes on to argue that "*formal processes themselves create expressive meaning.*"[6] Such expressivity can result from the manipulation by the composer of formal and style expectations of his listeners. In one frequently – cited article, Newcomb attempts to demonstrate this by analyzing the compositional strategy in Schumann's Second Symphony as a play on received models of sonata-rondo form. Just as an author might deliberately subvert readers' expectations concerning the structure and development of a plot in the novel, Schumann could utilize a repertoire of formal and tonal conventions to manipulate the expectations of his listeners, and consequently to control the expressive quality of the

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[3] See the excellent compendium of examples along with helpful elucidations and annotations by Ian Bent, in *Musical Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2, Musical Hermeneutics, Cambridge 1994.

[4] I am restricting my examples to American musicologists, although there are a number of German critics who have proposed narrative-like analyses of musical pieces that would also bear discussion. Hermann Danuser, for example, taking his cue from Adorno, has provided an enlightening reading of Mahler's symphonic forms in which its "*inner program*" can be decoded much like a novel by the invocation of "*tonal prototypes.*" See *Konstruktion des Romans bei Gustav Mahler*, in: Musikalische Prosa, Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1975, pp. 87-117.

[5] Anthony Newcomb: *Schumann and Late-Eighteenth Century Strategies of Musical Narrative*, in: 19th-Century Music 11 (1987), p. 165. Also see his article *Narrative Archetypes and Mahler's Ninth Symphony*, in Music and Text: Critical Inquiries, ed. Steven Paul Scher, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 118-36.

[6] Anthony Newcomb: *Those Images That Yet Fresh Images Beget*, The Journal of Musicology 2 (1983), p. 232.

music.[7] (This would presumably constitute Barthes's "*Proairetic*" code.[8]) A convincing musical plot could be established, in other words, by identifying through structural analysis those critical nodal points of tonal or thematic digression, deflection, and subversion. For Fred Maus, this means that music behaves much like a drama complete with characters, development, conflict, surprise, and resolution.

> "*Structuralist accounts remain promising for work on musical narrative. Typically such accounts a b s t r a c t from specific actions and individual characters while generalizing about the patterns of events within 'well-formed' narratives: accordingly ... this approach seems peculiarly well suited to bring out similarities between musical and nonmusical narratives.*"[9]

Of course, a composer need not be playing off any specific formal model in order to project a sense of narration. Using more hermeneutically rooted modes of analysis, Leo Treitler has argued that a narrative could be traced in the finale to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony by means of the affective qualities of keys and key relations.[10] By invoking historically rooted associations of key character, as well as established tonal relations on the circle of fifths (digressing to the more solemn "flat" tonalities of D major as opposed to its "brighter" sharp key relations), Beethoven, in Treitler's view, was able to construct a vast and dramatic tonal plot, one that could be said to complement Schiller's text (although not track it in any literal semiotic miming). In short, Beethoven "*composed with keys, as a playwright with characters and plots.*"[11]

Of course, the analogy drawn by Newcomb, Maus, and Treitler between musical form and narrativity in literature begs a fundamental question. What is music "narrating?" Our analysts speak of generalized expressive content or affect responses on the part of listeners that seem to be manipulated by tonal means. But it is not at all clear that this constitutes a narration. After all, if we pause to reflect upon the basic meaning of narration, we recognize at once a missing element in the structural descriptions noted above: narration demands some agent telling a story. Narrative is fundamentally a process of "recounting," not "representing" (the distinction between *diegesis* and *mime-*

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7 Many of the issues Newcomb raises concerning listener expectation based on received codes of form could be said to have been anticipated by Leonard Meyer, who much earlier articulated a sophisticated cognitive theory of style implication and realization in order to empirically ground the emotional responses of listeners to music. (See Leonard Meyer: *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

8 However, Patrick McCreless has suggested that a more musically intuitive application of Barthes's proairetic code would be to those linear elements of syntactic cohesion elucidated through Schenkerian analysis: voice leading, harmonic progression, and melodic linearity. See Patrick McCreless: *Roland Barthes's S/Z from a Musical Point of View*, in: In Theory Only 10/7 (1988), p. 12.

9 Fred Maus, *Music as Drama*, in: Music Theory Spectrum 10 (1988), p. 71, note 25.

10 This was a strategy pursued by Eric Chafe in his splendid study of tonal allegory in Bach's vocal music (Eric Chafe: *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of Bach*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). But Chafe was naturally not concerned with formal archetypes in Bach's stylistic world, rather in modal and modulatory archetypes.

11 Leo Treitler: *'To Worship That Celestial Sound': Motives for Analysis*, in: Music and the Historical Imagination, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 66.

sis).[12] We miss this critical element of discursive distance if we construe narration sim-
ply as a succession of events, no matter how expressive or emotive such events may
strike us. But in what way can we authentically speak of narrative content in music?

A preliminary answer to this question was made some thirty years ago by the Ameri-
can music theorist and composer, Edward Cone.[13] In his influential monograph, Cone
attempted to tackle head-on the hoary aesthetic problem of musical representation. He
sought to ask by what technical means vocal music could be said to have a voice, to
speak, as it were, for the composer. Towards this end, Cone attempted to differentiate
various levels of meaning in particular compositions by distinguishing levels of voices –
or "personae" – that could be heard simultaneously. For many songs, Cone argued, it
was possible to hear both a vocal protagonist represented by the text or poem (let's say,
the sad and lonely miller in Schubert's song cycle), as well as a musical commentary in
the accompaniment – the instrumental persona. Together, they create a third voice – a
"*virtual persona*" that Cone suggests is coterminous with the composer's voice (p. 18).
In this manner, the composer may assert the same kind of authorial control and authority
that a narrator does who controls the pacing and perspective of the story he tells.

But is this really narrative? That is, can a musical composition truly assert the para-
doxical mix of authorial presence and discursive detachment that constitutes narration in
literature? For that matter, must we presume the existence of a unifying, authorial voice
that Cone suggests exists in musical compositions? Might it not be possible to hear
multiple voices, ones often discordant with one another, and certainly not ventriloquial
mimings of some hieratic authorial source? Indeed, for many recent critics, narrative is
marked precisely by the presence of competing voices – multiple, overlapping stories
that Bakhtin characterizes as "*Heteroglossia*," and Derrida as "*polysemic*."[14] From a
post-structuralist perspective, we are not pressed to resolve this polyphonic texture to
any single master narrative; rather, the contestation of multiple voices becomes itself a
source of musical enrichment, tension, and signification.

For Lawrence Kramer, taking his cue from the late Barthes, the invocation of narra-
tive theory to music would result authentically in disruption, destabilization, and decon-
struction since "*narrative elements in music represent not forces of structure, but forces
of meaning*,"[15] and meanings can be individually constructed and contested, indelibly
framed as they are by social, cultural, and psychical factors. Far from confirming the
formalist ideals of unity and cohesion, an analysis which exposes the cacophony of dis-
cordant voices and competing "narrations" in a composition would be more akin to a
"postmodernist" aesthetic: "*The condition of narrative... is fractious and disorderly.
Structure and unity are its playthings, and its claims to truth are strongest where most
contingent, most mixed up with the perplexities of identity and power, sex and death*."

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[12] Prince, *Narratology*, p. 121.

[13] Edward Cone: *The Composer Voice*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

[14] Mieke Bal: *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Trans. Christine van Boheemen,
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

[15] Lawrence Kramer: *Musical Narratology*, in: Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge, Ber-
keley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 119.

One American musicologist who has done more than any other, I think, to sensitize us to the presence of multiple voices in music is Caroline Abbate. In her catalytic study of 1991, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, Abbate probed the boundaries of narrative theory in relation to music and offered a powerful reconfiguration of their relation.[16] Abbate is not a music theorist – indeed she has in the past been strongly critical of much formal music theory. Yet her work arguably lies within the paradigm of music analysis. In this virtuosic book that judiciously uses – but never tendentiously so – the most sophisticated concepts of recent literary theory, Abbate tackles head-on the problem of narrative in 19th-century opera. Not surprisingly, she begins by rejecting the traditional hermeneutic mode of narrative analysis by which music can be said to "tell stories." Music, she argues, is not capable of the kind of iconic isomorphism and diegetic narration possible in verbal texts except through "semiotic miming" (as in a naive reading of Wagnerian Leitmotivs). Indeed, she is suspicious of Cone's invocation of a still-majestic and hieratic "composer's voice." For Abbate, instrumental music lacks the kind of authorial detachment essential to a narrative mode of discourse. There is, in other words, no sense of "past tense" in music by which a teller narrates a story; music is phenomenologically a present-tense experience, catching us in the *"beat of passing time"* (p. 53).

Having worked to deconstruct plot-oriented readings of musical pieces – including overtly programmatic works such as Dukas's *Sorcerer's Apprentice* – as well as naive impositions of authorial intentionality or mimesis, Abbate then proceeds to rehabilitate music's Orphic power by introducing concepts of voicing. Like Cone, Abbate believes there are a multitude of voices in a composition that can be uncovered – some heard, some implied. At the same time, some characters in an opera – such as Cherubino, or Brünnhilde – can speak in a variety of reflexive voices depending upon the text, musical signification, and emplotment which may not be heard at all by others on the stage. By distinguishing phenomenal and noumenal music in opera music that is heard by the singers on stage, from non-diegetic music that is unheard, and is a part of their acoustical, ambient environment, Abbate is also able to introduce Lacanian notions of character self-consciousness and recursiveness. But key for Abbate is that narrativity is a special and quite rare phenomenon in music.

"I propose that we understand musical narration not as an omnipresent phenomenon, not as sonorous encoding of human events or psychological states, but rather as a rare and peculiar act, a unique moment of performing narration within a surrounding music" (p. 19).

The result is, ironically, a rousing vindication of narrative. For while music does not formally narrate, it may through these recursive moments of recollection allude to narration, those selected moments thereby accruing even more dramatic potency. Through an astute reading of selected passages of operatic music (the Bell Song from Delibes'

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[16] Caroline Abbate: *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Lakmé and the Trio from Act 1 of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*), Abbate shows us how those rare moments of narration embedded within the music in fact become the most dramatically telling and disruptive. Abbate is even able to transfer her arguments to the genre of absolute instrumental music and show that (again) in very rare moments, composers like Mahler can invoke a sense of narrative. It is possible to hear a musical gesture as narrative without necessarily having a referential object through processes of musical "enactment," "oscillation" and "juxtaposition" (pp 119-55).

Abbate is able to bring all these questions together as a peroration to her study with a virtuosic readings of Wotan's narrative scene in *Die Walküre* and Brünnhilde's final immolation speech in *Götterdämmerung*. These passages constitute kinds of narrative, but not ones that bear strong resemblance to their structuralist forefathers.

If, as Abbate suggests, narrative is not a ubiquitous feature of music, rather, a rare and potentially disruptive force, one may ask if in fact the whole structuralist apparatus of narrative theory is useful baggage for music analysis to begin with. Abbate herself finds that any application of structural narrativity to music requires such a reconfiguration of the notion in order to accommodate the peculiarly phenomenalistic, affective experience of music as to render it almost unrecognizable. Certainly one of the reasons Barthes himself gave up the structuralist project of narratology was that its technical apparatus became so cumbersome and intricate that it threatened to overwhelm the texts to which it was applied and crush them under its weight.

Yet rather than ending by delimiting and constricting the possible role of narrative theory to music, I would like to note at least one way in which narration does indeed play a large role in musical analysis. I will address this possibility by going back to those hermeneutic readings of Beethoven that described the *Eroica* Symphony as a Napoleonic epic. As I already mentioned, such poetic descriptions are ones we would unlikely encounter today in academic discourse. Instead, we choose to speak of thematic development, tonal disruption, cadential displacement, false recapitulations, and motivic digression. The fateful motive of destiny that Berlioz heard calling to Napoleon, or the agonistic struggle of Beethoven's will that Schering claimed lay behind the development section of the first movement are more antiseptically described by Schenker as Neapolitan predominants within a middle-ground ascending linear progression of a major sixth, itself a displacement within the overarching Urlinie of the development section.

Yet is it not clear that such technical analyses and historical descriptions, too, are narrations? Music analysts like Schenker tell stories about musical pieces, even if the protagonists have changed, or if the agency of intention has been displaced. Instead of Napoleon or Hector, the heroes of our stories become anthropomorphized motives, harmonies, and key areas, each undergoing their own tonal journey and trial. Narration, that is, becomes a universal mode of exegesis, and I would suggest that our contemporary rhetoric of music analysis can be read as insightfully as a kind of narration, as can the old modes of hermeneutic criticism be understood as legitimate genres of analytic criticism. It is just this spectacular rehabilitation of narrative theory as a universalizing

trope of analytic discourse that Scott Burnham undertakes in his recent book, *Beethoven Hero* published in 1995.[17]

Like Abbate, who is coincidentally a colleague with Burnham at Princeton University, Scott Burnham is interested in problems of expression and representation in 19th-century music, although his focus is, obviously, upon Beethoven and more specifically, the instrumental music of Beethoven's middle, "heroic" period. Unlike Abbate, though, Burnham has a more sympathetic attitude toward musical hermeneutics. Indeed, in one sense, Burnham's book itself can be read as a heroic attempt to vindicate Romantic hermeneutic readings by critics such as Berlioz, A. B. Marx, Ulibishev, Kretzschmar, and Schering. Far from being merely pleasant stories that a critic drapes over the musical body, hermeneutic readings of musical pieces can offer sophisticated and sensitive hearings of musical events often obscured by more conventional forms of analysis. Particularly in those moments of rupture, dislocation, and aporia, conventional analysis falters, as its aim normally is to demonstrate logic, continuity, and coherence. A narrative model, however, is precisely suited to accommodate such fissures in musical fabric. As both Kramer and Abbate noted, narration can be ultimately a force of disruption and deconstruction.

In fact, Burnham shows that any good structural analysis – such as Schenker's – must at heart be narrative. If Schenker dispenses with picturesque stories of Napoleonic battles or Homeric Odysseys, his graphs nonetheless tell vivid stories and can be scrolled through as dramatic plots in which motives and keys go through an epic trial little different than those endured by Napoleon or Ulysses. To return to the example of the Eroica, in those famous moments of musical drama and suspense in the first movement – the sudden appearance of C# in the opening theme, the crushing climax of dissonant harmonies in the development that lead so breathtakingly to a new theme in the remote key of E minor, the premature recapitulation of the main theme in a muted horn call, the disproportionately large coda – all of these much-discussed events pose dilemmas within a conventional thematic or formal analysis of the music that can only be accommodated by a kind of narrative. I should add that the primary focus of Burnham's book is not upon narrative; rather, it is to underscore how so many of contemporary music values – and consequently the music we choose to canonize today and the analytic tools we use to approach this repertoire – are shaped by a few select pieces from Beethoven's middle, "heroic" period.[18] This in itself is not a new idea. Carl Dahlhaus long ago made the same argument. But by showing how so many 19th-century aesthetic values that clustered around Beethoven's reception have transmuted to those institutional values of today's music historians, theorists, and critics, we see again vividly how little things have actually changed. We all continue to want to tell stories about music, even if the kinds of stories we tell have changed. In a fundamental sense, then, most music analysis is a story, as is most history.

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[17] Scott Burnham: *Beethoven Hero*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

[18] In fact, toward the end of his book, Burnham does reintroduce narrative as an attribute of Beethoven's middle-period music, although a narrative voice also infused with a paradoxical quality of "presence" or "enactment" – what Burnham terms a "*telling presence*" (p. 144).

Aristotle long ago noted that story telling is the most human of activities. Far from being a state we as academics should lament and attempt to overcome, our narrations, our many stories about music, are in fact one of the most humanizing characters of our discipline; we find ourselves participants in an ongoing conversation as both tellers and listeners, as committed participants in a tradition of musical poetics whose end is nowhere in sight.

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