Recomposition and the Sonata Theory Learning Laboratory

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A convincing pedagogical approach to teaching form is to present alternative versions of a given work. Melissa Hoag (2013) explores such alternative solutions, focusing on melodic, harmonic, and small form "recompositions." I extend this approach by implementing sonata form recomposition within a broad, active learning approach; Brian Moseley (2014) summarizes this approach as "interacting with (one's) understanding of the location of (formal) events in comparison with some paradigmatic form and what (one) should expect to come next." By learning to hear "what might have been" (Meyer 1989, 32) and critically comparing compositional alternatives, students can conceptualize the finer points of sonata analysis and interpret problematic formal sections and boundary points.

Example 1. Schubert, "Unfinished," Exposition

Example 1. Continued.

To illustrate the power of this approach (see Example 1), consider the pedagogical issues that arise when teaching the exposition of Schubert's Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D. 759 ("Unfinished") Symphony (mm. 13–38), which constitute a non-modulating parallel period ending on i (tonic). The first phrase modulates to D major (III), concludes with a PAC (m. 20), and *immediately* backtracks to V (of B minor), setting up the consequent phrase. The consequent has several twists and turns: first, the phrase provides a sequence that signifies a transitional

function (mm. 26–29); then, it arrives at an "incorrect" half cadence (m. 29); finally, it reboots with the same sequence in order to deliver a PAC (m. 38). Because the consequent phrase does not modulate, I characterize the entire parallel period is P.

By contrast, other opening periods (such as Mozart's Symphony No. 40) contain "dissolving consequents" (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 101) that drive toward a medial caesura and function as TR (followed immediately by S). Because P moves directly to S, this example presents a formal dilemma for students expecting a conventional TR. Understandably, some may think that the consequent phrase of the Schubert *is* TR despite ending on tonic in the home key, claiming: "the phrase after P must be TR, despite the fact that it ended in an authentic cadence, since the very next phrase begins with S." In fact, this is precisely what Hepokoski and Darcy conclude:

> "It may also happen that a longer stretch of caesura-fill, branching out from the tonic authentic cadence at the end of TR, is called upon to accomplish the modulation to the new key … as in the first movement of Schubert's Symphony No. 8 in B minor … with a modulatory caesura-fill leading to an S-space in G major that begins in m. 42" (29).

In a separate article (2015b), I argue that expositional stubbornness to overcome tonic is symptomatic of Schubert's expositions in general, resulting in "transitional" music backtracking to P.

This problematic example provided me an excellent opportunity to open up a setting for active learning using a student debate forum. (I note that the students had been prompted to prepare a formal analysis of the entire movement, though this line of questioning can be carried out without such preparation.) First, they voted "for" or "against" the existence of TR in the original score. Most students agreed that while the second phrase did not ultimately function as a

transition, the phrase has characteristics that are "transitional," such as the ascending chromatic sequence and energy gain. After establishing to the class that this kind of transition problem—almost obsessively returning to the tonic following a venture into a distant key area—is common to Schubert's expositions, I then provided the class an example of "what might have been": a version of this consequent that modulates to G major (the key of the second theme group) and employs a half cadence in that key, with a dominant lock and a few hammer blows for rhetorical effect (see Example 2).

Example 2. Recomposition of mm. 31–39

Using the recomposition as an experiment, the students were able to engage with aural excerpts that supported *both sides* of the debate. Even those that voted "against" the second phrase as TR acknowledged that there was ample similarity between the original version and the recomposed version on several theoretical grounds (sequence and energy gain). Students that voted "for" recognized that the recomposed version carries the music forward in more definitive way; by contrast, the original version regressed to the tonic key. In summation, the experience of active listening enhanced the students' ability to intuit nuances about sonata analysis.

This essay explains how to turn the theory classroom into an interactive laboratory in which students use recomposition as a tool for engaging difficult formal problems and developing critical listening, analysis, and performing skills. I show how students within the interactive laboratory engage with potentially ambiguous formal boundaries using interpretive

concepts built on Hepokoski and Darcy's Sonata Theory. As such, instructors must—as a pre-requisite—introduce their narrative approach and terminology representing thematic units, including two-part expositions (this may appear as supplement to an undergraduate core or—more likely—in a form and analysis seminar) over a two- or three-week period. Though Neuwirth (2011, 206–7) argues that continuous expositions actually pre-date the two-part paradigm, e.g., in C.P.E. Bach and Sammartini, I assert that the latter—as modularly expressed by Sonata Theory—is an inviting introduction to the sonata narrative, serving as a valuable pedagogical forebear.

Once students have thoroughly internalized those concepts, I explore two categories of continuous expositions enumerated in Seth Monahan's 2011 article—"bait-and-switch" and "run-on" types (see 2011, 30–31)—based on Hepokoski and Darcy's "expansion-section" subtypes (see 52–60). Additionally, I address the paradox of locating *closure* within sonata expositions (and recapitulations). For this, students use a new analytical concept I call "resetting of the formal compass" (RFC) to articulate the process and phenomenology of achieving closure from both the performer's perspective and composer's perspective. By engaging in recomposition, students also learn that creating music is an effective way to comprehend and communicate theoretical ideas and musical interpretations.

Part I: Continuous Expositions

Because continuous expositions lack some of the clear formal markers associated with two-part expositions (e.g., the medial caesura), theory instructors who introduce the exposition as containing four generic theme groups (P, TR, S, C) frequently wrestle with the problem of teaching students how to demarcate where these sections begin and end. To create a sonata learning laboratory, instructors should first determine what formal categories will be used to

facilitate concrete discussion. The first movements of the Haydn's "Joke" Quartet, Op. 33 No. 2,

and "Farewell" Symphony, No. 45, which exhibit Monahan's two categories of continuous

expositions, will provide the focus of the pedagogical activities described below.

Laboratory No. 1: The "Bait and Switch"

A "bait-and-switch" continuous exposition sets up a two-part exposition, including a

quasi-MC, only to sidestep S and veer into a musical *fortspinnung.* In the "Joke," the bait is set

with the dominant lock in m. 15, leading to a subsequent quasi-MC in m. 19; in m. 19, however,

S is averted, instead darting to a PAC in m. 21(see Example 3)!

Example 3. Haydn, "Joke," Exposition

The main activity in the "bait-and-switch" laboratory is for students to create, with the instructor's assistance, an alternate version of the music that really *does* contain an MC, so that they understand and appreciate the deception! The procedure below describes how to create and facilitate an active learning approach using the concept of the "bait and switch" and recomposition:

1. The instructor provides an explanation of the "bait-and-switch" and a hearing of the "Joke" aurally (without the score) to generate an initial reaction from the students. First, everyone should consider *what just happened*! Students discuss as a class (or in groups of three to five students) the musical cues that suggest a forthcoming quasi-MC and identify what musical features contribute to a full MC, such as a progression that tonicizes V, a dominant lock, and increased energy gain (as found in mm. 15–18). Once these parameters are established, the students may see the score in order to collaboratively discern *the* hypothetical stopping point (m. 19).

2. This stopping point becomes the cue for recomposition. Depending on the skills of the class, recompositions may be performed—along with the instructor—as individual, groups, or the entire class (they will need their instruments!). In most cases, the instructor can supply a bass line for hammer blows (scale degree 5), while students collectively fill out the V chords (Michaelsen provides more excellent ideas for implementing in-class improvisation). In the attached "Joke" recomposition, you will hear the F major hammer blows in m. 19 here. Once the medial caesura is reached, advanced students may improvise how a second theme might go had the music stopped; each time this will be set up by the V chords. A sample recomposition of mm. 17–18 is provided below (Example 4).

Example 4. Recomposition of mm. 17 - 18

3. Once the recomposition session has concluded, the instructor returns to the original, re-emphasizing the critical point where the music pulls back from its original intention, jettisons the possible MC, and moves forward into a *fortspinnung* (mm. 19 and 20 in the "Joke," leading to a PAC in m. 21).

Ultimately, this activity engages students in two separate ways: 1) the recognition of a stopping point in a "bait-and-switch" exposition (a quasi-MC), and 2) demonstrating, along with the instructor, how this version would go if the full MC were attained.

Laboratory No. 2: The "Run-On"

A "run-on" exposition does not present the same ruse as the "bait-and-switch": it never implies a possible MC arrival. Rather, the music plows forward into a new key without preparation; when the new key is achieved, the instructor can define this as "the point of no return," displaying the insistent forward momentum that follows. Caplin will often demarcate this point as just before the "subordinate theme" since, according to his theory, this theme is inherent to every sonata; for Hepokoski and Darcy, however, an MC is requisite for an S group. (Depending on whether Caplin is included in the curriculum, an instructor may choose to highlight this theoretical difference!). As Hepokoski and Darcy describe the first movement of Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony, instead of veering toward III (A major), the exposition

"collapses at once to A minor (iii, m. 38) with a return of a variant of the plunging *Sturm und Drang* theme" (316). Here, the A minor arrival serves as the "point of no return," displayed in Example 5:

Example 5: "Point of No Return" in Haydn's "Farewell"

point of no return

The primary focus of the "run-on" laboratory is for students to create, with the instructor's assistance, an alternate version of the music that sidesteps the "point of no return" and re-routes

to an MC. The procedure below describes how to create and facilitate an active learning

approach using the concept of the "run-on" and recomposition:

1. The instructor provides an explanation of the "run-on" and the score of "Farewell."

   (Providing the score early on is recommended here, as the critical points are far more

   subtle than in the "bait-and-switch.")

2. As a class, students listen carefully for where the new key is actively underway (usually

   V or III in Classical sonatas). The instructor can define this as "the point of no return,"

   and should *not be mistaken for an MC*. This point may result in collective debate, which

   may occur in groups or among the entire class, defending the question "if there is a sense

   of restart, where does it occur?"

   For example, in the "Farewell," one may argue that such a restart occurs at m. 23, as

   there is a strong shift into A major. For pedagogical purposes, I have chosen m. 38 to

   dramatize the shift into the minor mode.

3. Having attained one (or more) "points of no return," students can proceed to the

   recomposition—an expanded version of the previous case—with the instructor and

   students collaboratively creating music that drives toward a created MC. To initiate the

   recomposition process, the instructor should begin by writing out a chord progression

   (Roman numerals / FB) that can be supported by scale degrees 4 - #4 - 5 (or equivalent

   function), followed by a dominant lock progression and hammer blows. In the recordings,

   the "point of no return" is followed by a ii6, V6/5 of V, a dominant lock, and hammer

   blows; all three begin with m. 34, with the recomposed music starting at m. 38. (I note

   that these recordings are not given to the students, but rather are tools for

   implementation.)

a.   The first recording illustrates how the bass line that can be performed by the instructor (starting at m. 38); this will be on the board as well.

b.   The second recording realizes the chord progression on the board that students will perform during their recomposition, and is reproduced below.

Example 6: Recomposition of mm. 34–46
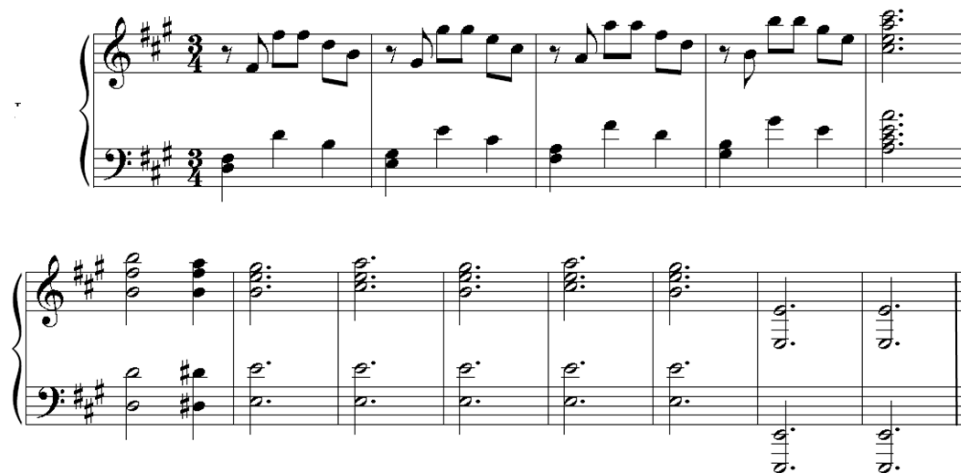
c.   The third recording realizes a full recomposition that is optional, depending on the skill of the instructor. Alternatively, the instructor may continue to play the bass line while individual students improvise more complex variants.

Of course, certain works may not fall neatly into "bait-and-switch" or "run-on" categories; this type of exercise involves precise analysis (is there a hidden MC in the music?). As such, there are several follow-up homework assignments that can reinforce the in-class experience and be discussed the following class:

a) Written essay. Students study the score and describe what a recomposition might entail, identifying and defending specific quasi-MC arrivals or "points of no return." These should be brought to class for a debate, either individually or in groups.

b) Written out recomposition. Students compose an elaborated version of the in-class improvisational exercises; the elaborations of these chord progressions can range from triadic figurations to ornamental lines. These versions can be performed by the instructor, student, in groups, or by the entire class!

To conclude Part I, I provide a list of several works to which on employ these pedagogical strategies (all of which are discussed in Suurpää 1999, Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, Miyake 2009, Monahan 2011, or Aziz 2015b):

Piece	"Bait-and-Switch" or "Run-On"
Haydn, String Quartet in G minor, Op. 74, No. 3, i	Bait-and-switch
Haydn, Symphony No. 88 in G Major, i	Bait-and-switch
Haydn, Symphony No. 96 in D major, "Miracle," i	Bait-and-switch
Chopin, Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 8, i	Bait-and-switch
Haydn, String Quartet in B minor, Op. 33 no. 1, iv	Run-on
Beethoven, Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 57, "Appassionata," iii	Run-on
Beethoven, Piano Sonata in A major, Op. 101, i	Run-on
Chopin, Piano Sonata in C minor, Op. 4, i	Run-on

While I offer the provisional categories of "bait-and-switch" and "run-on" for organizational purposes, it is possible that these (or other) selections may fall *in between* categories; e.g., a

quasi-MC (or prepared quasi-MC) for one listener may not be satisfactory for another! Ultimately, such a decision invites interpretation, as each listener will "take the bait" in a unique way.

Part II: Expositional (and Recapitulatory) Closure

Students can also engage with recompositions to better comprehend ideas about expositional and recapitulatory closure. Determining the line between S and C—the placement of the EEC (or ESC)—is far from straightforward for students new to Sonata Theory. The goal of recomposition is to invoke intuitions that students may possess: that a strong cadential arrival is in some way "overruled" in favor of a more conclusive cadence (many of these instances can be classified as "EEC deferred" by Hepokoski and Darcy, see 150–170). The placement (and student debate) over these EEC candidates will be central to the active listening tasks.

Laboratory No. 3: "Resetting of the Formal Compass"

"Resetting of the formal compass" (RFC) attempts to merge the perspectives of Caplin (1998, 2009, and 2013) and Hepokoski/Darcy on establishing expositional closure. I posit that between these two (or more) EEC candidates there is often a "memoryless" point where the music resets itself, allowing for the listener to reposition his or her formal hearing and thus prepare a more conclusive cadential gesture. This point (the RFC)—one that will prove to be vital to the active listening process—is a *neutral* formal function, as opposed to the traditional "beginning," "middle," or "end," providing an alternative to Caplin's three primary categories. To complete the theoretical underpinnings of our new formal function, RFC in this context can be likened to a singular point of Schmalfeldt's (2011) "C becoming S." As I argue in separate work (2015a), an original EEC and C (designated as EEC_α and C_α) is "overruled" by an RFC,

transporting the music (and the listener!) to S_β, EEC_β, C_β; α and β are considered different "time zones." In the present article, instructors will focus on a particular case of the RFC, in which a sonata exposition reaches a possible ending point; upon reaching this point, it simply keeps going, in search of an additional closing juncture. (As before, an instructor may choose to introduce this topic without Caplin explicitly.)

Example 7a: Exposition of Mozart's K. 330

Example 7b: Exposition of Mozart's K. 333

Two examples of such works are the first movements of two piano sonatas by Mozart: C major, K. 330, and B-flat major, K. 333. Example 7 displays these scores (which will *not* be distributed upon first hearing; for now, they serve to aid the current reader). In K. 330, the first possible EEC candidate (EEC_α) occurs at m. 34, and the very next PAC (at bar 42) can be recast as the final cadence of the exposition; 2) in K. 333, EEC_α occurs at m. 38, with mm. 38–46 serving as the first part of the closing zone, and mm. 46–50 serving as the winding down to a possible expositional stopping point at m. 50. The success of this approach is dependent on students actively listening and reacting to points of possible closure. When initially exposed to an exposition, students will vote (in real time) on EEC candidates ("you can vote early or you

can vote often"), not only to encourage them to be open-minded, but also to grant them permission to hear multiple closing junctures. The initial vote is performed *without* the score; for a second hearing, the score is supplied. Then, with the instructor's assistance, students will create alternative versions of the music that contain a stopping point. The procedure below describes how to create and facilitate an active learning approach using the concept of the RFC and recomposition:

1. During a first hearing, students vote on many different bars where they felt a sense of closure by raising their hands—this can, of course, occur in multiple places.

2. Students then receive the score and a second hearing, now marking their votes—which may have changed—on the score. For example, K. 333's EEC can occur at m. 38, m. 50, m. 59, or possibly even m. 46. These EEC points can be debated in several ways:

   a) Students can form different teams, with debates between each team supporting a different EEC location.

   b) An array of EEC locations may be displayed on the board; students will be invited to the board to defend their answers (either aurally or written). The defense may include specific theoretical terms or more general descriptions.

3. Students will debate a stopping point that may serve as the *end of the exposition*, which—in this case—serves as the RFC point. Of course, the music must sufficiently "wind down" as to represent the final cadence; I have identified viable stopping points at m. 42 and m. 50 in K. 330 and K. 333 respectively. This is precisely where the recomposition happens; it may be as simple as inserting an appoggiatura or a suspension in the "final" bar, as heard in the following two examples (here and here). The recomposition may be executed by the instructor or student on any instrument, one person at a time.

4. Resume with the original version, making special note of how the composer furnishes the "last" EEC candidate; in K. 330 and K. 333, these cadence points occur at mm.'s 58 and 63, respectively. Students can retrospectively evaluate their recompositions in light this final hearing and appreciate how the alternative version confirmed (or denied) their own analytical instincts.

A challenging follow-up discussion is to consider the interrelationships between the real and recomposed versions, considering analytical nuances and summarizing what each version is trying to express musically. This also acknowledges that the original is *complex enough* to afford these possibilities; sonatas are a remarkable venue for evoking one path while simultaneously suggesting an alternative. This is underscored by Hepokoski and Darcy's idea that a sonata narrative affords a "constellation" of compositional choices (11).

I complete Part II by providing a list of works that can employ a similar analysis. In a separate manuscript (2015a), I define several additional cases of RFC in Classical music; however, the following works all conform to the specific definitions and classroom procedures outlined above.

Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C minor, Op. 13, "Pathetique," i
Beethoven, Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21, i
Beethoven, Symphony No. 3 in Eb major, Op. 55, i
Haydn, String Quartet in D minor, Op. 76 no. 2, i
Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, i
Mozart, String Quartet in Bb major, K. 458, "Hunt," i
Mozart, Symphony No. 38 in D major, K. 504, "Prague," i
Mozart, Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550, i

Conclusion

Ultimately, this pedagogical approach underscores the notion that closure within sonatas is *not* a singular moment but a process that may be transformed over the course of several hearings, enhanced by hypothetical versions of an exposition. Previously, I showed how recompositions may be used to model the complexities of continuous expositions, with students drawing on their previous knowledge of two-part expositions. The utility of recomposition in sonata theory pedagogy is limitless, particularly in the setting of active learning. By engaging with problematic sonata spaces, students become empowered to confront difficult formal dilemmas with nuance and insight. Not only can they explain their analysis using evidence from the score, but they can also marshal evidence from beyond the score—"what might have been"—to confirm a range of worthy musical intuitions.

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