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Whether or not we are aware of it, music theory pedagogy is ahead of the game. While many in the humanities are searching for alternatives to the careful historicism and contextual scholarship of the past few decades, our discipline—and particularly our pedagogical practice—finds itself in the unexpected position of having anticipated the newest trend. In recent years, many scholars in the fields of literature and the arts have urged a reinvestment in the study of form and in formalist analysis.[1] Scholars of English literature, specifically, have called the movement a "New Formalism."[2] The work collected under this rubric employs a diverse array of methods in order to redress a perceived neglect of the forms, styles, techniques, and material dimensions of the cultural products under consideration. Form, in

[1] Recent studies representative of or commenting on this trend include Kirstie Blair, *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Derek Attridge, "A Return to Form?," *Textual Practice* 22, no. 3 (2008): 563–575; Angela Leighton, *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Marjorie Levinson, "What Is New Formalism?," *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 558–569; *Reading for Form*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Terry Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007); Caroline Levine, "Strategic Formalism: Toward a New Method in Cultural Studies," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 4 (2006): 625–657; W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Commitment to Form; or, Still Crazy after All These Years," *PMLA* 118, no. 2 (2003): 321-325; and *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark David Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002), to name only a few. In general the movement shares elements of a broader trend in the humanities that seeks a shift in emphasis away from subjectivity in favor of materiality or, to use Jane Bennett's words, "the active powers issuing from nonsubjects." Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), ix.

[2] See in particular Levinson, "What is New Formalism?" This movement should not be confused with the movement among late twentieth-century American poets that, coincidentally, goes by the same name. On this poetic "new formalism," a practice invested in the revival of historic forms such as the sestina, villanelle, sonnet, and so on, see Robert McPhillips, *The New Formalism: A Critical Introduction* (Charlotte, N.C.: Volcanic Ash Books, 2003).

this context, should be understood in the broadest possible sense as a means of organization, and formalisms as the tools employed in order to understand it.[3] Music theory, of course, has never truly turned away from form or formalisms, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the standard practices of our pedagogy. Although some of our methods have changed, we remain committed to the technical vocabulary and formal abstraction necessary to understand musical systems. In a way we have been working to accomplish the goals of New Formalism for many years. Nevertheless, instead of congratulating ourselves for holding fast to tradition through the tempest of contextualism (in our field, the "new musicology"), we ought to use this moment to reflect on our classroom formalisms and ask questions about our commitments to the understanding of form.[4]

Those of us who find ourselves in the habit of teaching music theory are often indebted to a great many teachers. Mary Arlin is one of mine. Her nine o'clock course began my first year of college, and I can remember wondering, that morning, how there could be six semesters' worth of material on as curious a topic as music theory. Arlin's students know that her pedagogy is intense in its dedication, musicality, precision, and regard for standards. That unforgettable morning she demonstrated that our six semesters would be only a small introduction to a lifetime of learning in music. With some distance from my freshman year I am able to see the impact of her formidable pedagogy on my scholarship and my own teaching. Her classroom procedures reflect a conviction about what sort of thing music theory is and how it ought to be communicated to students. In many ways, the recent developments in our field and in the humanities in general have rendered her practices more relevant than ever. An examination of some of these alongside the relevant trends in humanistic formalism can provide an instructive intervention in the way we understand the pedagogy of undergraduate music theory.

[3] In this context, musical forms such as the sonata or rondo are only one type of organizing principle among many.

[4] Throughout this essay I will use the terms contextualism, contextual practice, and contextual scholarship in order to describe a body of work that responds to the transformations of our field in the 1980s and 1990s and seeks an understanding of the specific cultural and historical embedment of music. This is the type of work that James Currie calls "contextual politics." Currie, "Music After All," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 1 (2009): 145–203 at 154.

The place of formalism

At some point during that first semester of music theory, Arlin asked our class to perform a simple melody that was meant to illustrate a point about harmonization. Together as a class we impressively rendered its pitches and durations without fault on our first try. Pleased with ourselves, we thought the exercise accomplished. Arlin was less than satisfied. She instructed us to revisit our performance, checking it carefully for errors. After several unsuccessful trials, Arlin informed us of our oversight: we had performed the melody without regard to the printed dynamics. As hapless first-year students we had thought these paratexts peripheral to the point of the harmonization exercise. Arlin understood them to be constitutive of it.

I relate this story here because it is representative of Arlin's insistence on a significant relationship between theoretical formalisms and a living repertoire of music. Over the course of her career, Arlin extended the work of a mid-century movement in music theory pedagogy that sought a deeper and more meaningful integration of musical excerpts and entire pieces within basic theoretical training. In Robert Gauldin's assessment, this shift began during the 1960s with the publication of music anthologies specifically intended for use in the music theory curriculum. These include Charles Burkhart's *Anthology for Music Analysis* and the volumes complied by Howard Murphy, Robert Melcher, and Willard Warch under the title *Music for Study*.[5] Arlin and her Ithaca College colleagues produced their own volume for use in the undergraduate curriculum: *Music Sources: A Collection of Excerpts and Complete Movements* was formally published in 1979.[6] This text

[5] Robert Gauldin, "Some Personal Reflections on Past Methods of Teaching and What They Can Tell Us About Current and Future Initiatives," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 17 (2003): 47–58 at 48–49; *Anthology for Music Analysis*, ed. Charles Burkhart (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston: 1964); *Music for Study: A Source Book of Excerpts*, ed. Howard Murphy and Robert Melcher (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1960); *Music for Advanced Study: A Source Book of Excerpts*, ed. Robert Melcher and Willard Warch (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

[6] *Music Sources: A Collection of Excerpts and Complete Movements*, ed. Mary I. Arlin, Charles H. Lord, Arthur Ostrander, and Marjorie S. Porterfield (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1979).

played a vital role in Arlin's pedagogy, and she stressed that her undergraduates regard its contents as they would regard the music they studied in their lessons and ensembles.

Alongside her emphasis on repertoire, Arlin was invested in a clear and demonstrable vision for music theory's conventional formalisms. Although the harmonization exercise asked us, on the one hand, to think of the combinatorial properties of the melody within a system of rules—the formal elements of which she was concerned to explain—it also asked us, on the other, to think of the melody as something more than a collection of definitive pitch names, durations, metric accents, and so forth. These formalisms of the melody's attributes provide criteria that allow us to attend to its specificity, structure, and potential relationships with other materials (in this case, harmonies). Powerful formalisms, they afford us a way of manipulating the material in a bounded domain that corresponds to one part of the musical experience. Formalism in this sense, then, is a dynamic, active practice that is one part of knowing music.[7] The simple but important lesson here is that the formal properties of the system are not the point themselves, but are, instead, a particular pedagogical path into the material. They are one way of probing the specific networks of relationships that create the affective qualities so consequential to our students and our audiences.

In an interesting twist, this type of active formalism is the sort of practice to which many recent literary theories aspire. The writing on this issue can sometimes take a tone of nostalgia for something lost—a practice of recuperating an outmoded methodology. Marjorie Levinson, for instance, writes, "we no longer attend to the processes and structures of mediation through which particular discourses… come to represent the real."[8] There is a sense in which the criticism of days past has been so far eclipsed by newer trends that the material under investigation is no longer treated to any close scrutiny. Mark David Rasmussen, in the introduction to a volume on Renaissance literature that addresses this problem,

[7] This is what Susan Wolfson calls an "activist formalism." Wolfson, "Introduction," in *Reading for Form*, ed. Wolfson and Brown, 3–24 at 6. Along these lines, see also Martin Scherzinger, "The Return of the Aesthetic: Musical Formalism and its Place in Political Critique," in *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing*, ed. Andrew Dell'Antonio (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 252–277.

[8] Levinson, "What Is New Formalism?," 561.

states the matter plainly: "Why is such a change needed now? Briefly, because the field has moved too far away from these questions lately, in favor of modes of analysis that for all of their methodological sophistication tend to interpret Renaissance works as bundles of historical or cultural content, without much attention to the way that their meanings are shaped and enabled by the possibilities of form."[9] Rasmussen also couches the intervention as a type of return to past methods and sets of questions no longer emphasized. Still, the ultimate goal of these writers is not to efface the important lessons of contextual scholarship or simply set aside the historical and cultural dimensions of the objects of inquiry. On the contrary, the "return" to formalism that they propose is in fact a broadening out of contextual practices, or a methodological shoring up of those efforts. In the concluding contribution to Rasmussen's collection, Richard Strier asserts, "one has to know the texture as well as the content of ideas to do intellectual or cultural history with true sensitivity."[10] The emphasis on form and formalist inquiry in this view is something of a logical continuation of historicism and contextualism rather than a turn away from it.

The diversity of articles gathered in Rasmussen's volume reflects the pluralism of approaches to form and formalism that has come to characterize the movement. Paul Alper's contribution discusses structure and texture in Shakespeare's sonnets, reinvigorating early twentieth-century conversations about unity and coherence (a scholarly gesture that mirrors, in certain respects, important lineages in our own field).[11] Joseph Loewenstein's essay investigates the prosody, accentual structure, and soundworld of John Marston's poetry.[12] Other essays in the volume take up tropes, borrowing, wordplay, poetic speech tags, and yet more formal devices. The

[9] Mark David Rasmussen, "Introduction: New Formalisms?," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen, 1.

[10] Richard Strier, "Afterword: How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can't Do Without It," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen, 207–215 at 212.

[11] Paul Alpers, "Learning from the New Criticism: The Example of Shakespeare's Sonnets," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen, 115–138.

[12] Joseph Loewenstein, "Marston's Gorge and the Question of Formalism," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen, 89–112.

variety of forms and formalisms under consideration continues to proliferate in the scholarship. In Wolfson and Brown's edited collection *Reading for Form*, Robert Kaufman inspects issues of line length and brevity in a reading of images from the poetry of Blake and Ginsberg.[13] Angela Leighton's compelling *On Form* provides a historical account of the term itself.[14] Most recently, Kristie Blair's 2012 monograph provides an assessment of the connections between the rhythms of Victorian poetry and expressions of faith.[15] The overarching emphasis in these studies is on compositional techniques, particular manners of fashioning and shaping structure, close reading, and material specificity. This movement is interested in the ways art does the work that it does.

If these motivations sound and feel familiar, it is because they are. Music theory—particularly music theory pedagogy—never experienced the same shift in emphasis away from forms and formalist inquiry that occurred in literature. For the most part we have remained committed to the kinds of formalisms that literary studies would now like to rehabilitate. Indeed, the analytical discourse within the new formalist movement even approximates musicality at times. Terry Eagleton, for instance, can write, "Form concerns such aspects of the poem as tone, pitch, rhythm, diction, volume, metre, pace, mood, voice, address, texture, structure, quality, syntax, register, point of view, punctuation, and the like."[16] Derek Attridge goes so far as to assert that the idea of formalism as a supposedly new paradigm reflects a lack of true interdisciplinary engagement from the standpoint of literary studies. He points out that the analysis of line, rhythm, harmony, melody, and so on, never suffered from neglect in the critical inspection of visual art and music.[17]

[13] Robert Kaufman, "Everybody Hates Kant: Blakean Formalism and the Symmetries of Laura Moriarty," in *Reading for Form*, ed. Wolfson and Brown, 203–230. The essays in this collection were originally published in a special issue of *Modern Language Quarterly*: Wolfson and Brown, eds., "Reading for Form," Special Issue, *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000).

[14] Leighton, *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word*.

[15] Blair, *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion*.

[16] Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem*, 66.

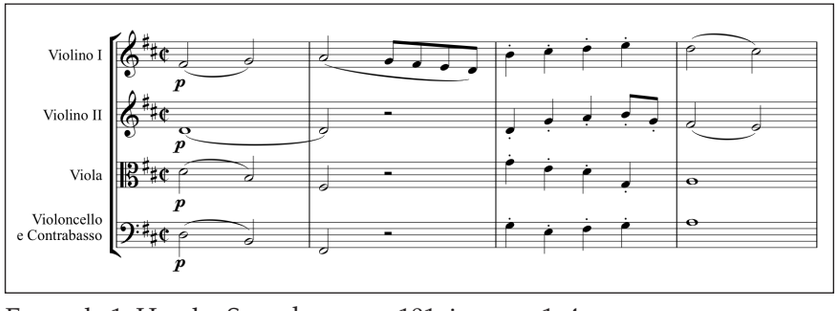
[17] Remarking on the lack of attention to form in literary studies during the dominance of the historicist paradigm, Derek Attridge writes, "Further places to look during this period for insight into formal properties are the disciplines concerned with other art forms—music and the visual arts. It's true that these disciplines have complex histories in which the notion of aesthetic form has sometimes had a rough ride, but qualities of colour, line, shape, tone, rhythm, harmony, melody, and so on have never been subjected to the dismal fate of the equivalent, and equivalently important, features of literary works… A fuller commitment to interdisciplinarity would have led to a greater appreciation of other approaches to formal issues, and perhaps to a richer interplay between the historical and the aesthetic." Attridge, "A Return to Form?," 566. Though Attridge accuses literary studies of insularity, the fact that their return to form has had virtually no presence within our field's journals suggests that we have been equally at fault.

The unfortunate result of music theory's unbroken commitment to form and formalism is that we have not always been forced to explain it nor—more importantly—to theorize its place in our classrooms.[18] If literary New Formalism seeks a commitment to form renewed, music theory pedagogy might well seek a theorization of our commitment's continuation—a framing gesture that situates our formalism as a practice at a meta-methodological level, and demonstrates for our undergraduate students the work of that practice, its boundaries, and its benefits. Our pedagogical materials, texts, and traditions already profess our ongoing devotion to formalist methods. The component missing, then, is a careful exposition of formalism as a practice that we chose to engage in. Alongside our investment in the role of repertoire in the music theory classroom, we are given the chance to characterize our formalist abstractions as devices that perform specific work in the comprehensive understanding of that repertoire; devices that open sets of investigative pathways we can enter and exit at will.

[18] This is not to say that the practice of music theory in general does not have its loud defenders—indeed there are many—but rather that these defenses are not often engaged with pedagogical practices. For a recent and potent example, see Susan McClary, "The Powers and Limits of Theory," *Music Theory Online* 16, no. 1 (2010), accessed May 4, 2012. http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.10.16.1/mto.10.16.1.mcclary.html.

One case study:
expanding the tonic with an inverted subdominant

In order to illustrate what I intend by a theorization of our commitment, I will turn to one specific example from first-year music theory. The opening two measures of the finale to Haydn's "Clock" Symphony no. 101 are a textbook example (quite literally) of tonic expansion by means of an inverted subdominant (Example 1).[19] Haydn moves deftly through the subdominant's first inversion to the first inversion of the tonic by means of contrary motion in the outer voices. The melody's ascending $\hat{3}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{5}$ line is coupled with the broader descending gesture of $\hat{1}$, $\hat{6}$, $\hat{3}$ in the bass. The elegant simplicity of this motion sets the stage for the singing style of the first phrase, and its melodic ascent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ becomes an important thematic element later in the movement.



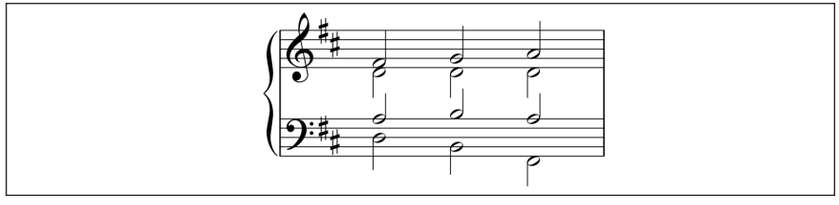
Example 1: Haydn, Symphony no. 101, iv, mm. 1–4.

The progression from the tonic through the subdominant and back to the tonic is one that requires some commentary in first-year music theory, particularly if students have not yet encountered the subdominant outside of its role as an intermediate harmony leading to the dominant. They may well wonder how it is acceptable to return to the tonic so quickly without the intervention of dominant harmony. The explanation of this excerpt therefore requires talk not only of its paradigmatic voice leading but also of expansion and harmonic function. This moment, among others in first-year music theory, can serve as an

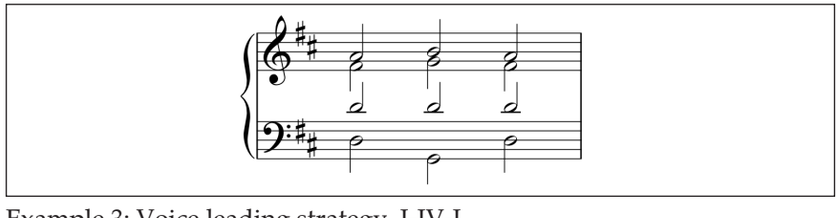
[19] Aldwell and Schachter use this example in their chapter on "Other Uses of IV, IV^6, and VI." Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter with Allen Cadwallader, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 4th ed. (Boston: Schirmer, 2011), 233.

interesting place for a discussion about the many characteristics and roles of individual harmonies within the tonal system, and is an opportune time to discuss the ways in which a familiar entity—like the subdominant triad—can serve in an unfamiliar capacity. It should build on similar lessons regarding the many uses of the dominant and the different roles the tonic can play. The abstracted lesson in this case has applications beyond the theory of harmony. Like many apparently simple situations, the harmonic progression in these opening measures touches on fairly complex theoretical and aesthetic issues.

In addition to these larger concerns there is the specific disposition of the writing itself. The opening measures of Haydn's movement demonstrate a way of expanding the tonic through the subdominant's first inversion, allowing for a contrapuntally optimal support of the melody's $\hat{3}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{5}$ without the use of any dominant harmony. An abstraction of the excerpt's voice leading strategy is given below in Example 2. This paradigmatic I-IV^6-I^6 progression allows for a tonic expansion with an ascending melodic line and a descent through scale degree $\hat{6}$ to $\hat{3}$ in the bass. By contrast to the I-IV-I expansion, which uses neighboring motions in the upper voices (Example 3), the outward, broadening motion of this progression is generative of energy. This is one reason that it is particularly effective as the opening to Haydn's lively finale.



Example 2: Voice leading strategy, I-IV^6-I^6.



Example 3: Voice leading strategy, I-IV-I.

A number of questions attend the relationships between Haydn's music, the formal properties of the excerpt's voice leading strategy, the abstracted principles of its harmonic motion, and the theoretical issues at stake. We might well ask which of these we are ultimately trying to explain. Does the excerpt help us to understand voice leading in the context of tonic expansion or do our abstractions of its voice leading help us to understand Haydn's music? Which is the ultimate goal in the context of an hour of undergraduate teaching? In Aldwell and Schachter's text, the discussion of this classic example of the I-IV^6-I^6 progression comes to the conclusion:

> This characteristic function of IV^6 can be most valuable, especially if a leading-tone chord (VII^6 or V$^4_3$) is not wanted as the support for $\hat{4}$… Incidentally, IV$^5_3$ does not work very well in this situation; the root-position chord following a large leap in the bass creates too heavy an effect for the passing function of the chord.[20]

The emphasis in this passage is on voice leading, and more specifically on the act of model composition. Aldwell and Schachter are guiding the students through the requisite activity of generating exercises with successful counterpoint and characteristic use of harmonic language. The objective in the background is one in which Haydn's music is re-inscribed into a world of formalisms in order for its specificity to translate into generally applicable principles. The knowledge that the excerpt has to offer enters into this network of formalisms so that it can aid in the explanation of other works of music. In this relationship the repertoire and the formalisms thereof (in this case, its voice leading strategies) work in tandem to explain a larger system that draws on both.

Not everyone will agree that the relationship described above is the most effective in music theory pedagogy, nor will everyone agree that it works as it should for our students. Peter Schubert, among others, has recently criticized the use of music theory's standard formalisms in the classroom, advocating instead for a blend of model composition, stylistic improvisation, and analysis of repertoire. For Schubert, the abstractions of musical processes and formalizations of rules as they are commonly practiced are too far removed from the repertoire to have a meaningful impact on our

[20] Aldwell and Schachter with Cadwallader, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 233.

understanding of it.[21] This fraught relationship has long generated commentary (it was part of the impetus for the anthology that Arlin and her colleagues compiled) and there is still a good deal of palpable anxiety surrounding the issue in recent publications. Schubert, for example, advances, "nothing other than real music should appear in class." He goes on to define "real" music as "pieces or parts of pieces composed or improvised by students or from famous composers."[22] Hali Fieldman, in a review of three major, twenty-first century textbooks of music theory, suggests that the usual emphasis on formalism "abandons, in a profound sense, the music itself."[23] For my own part I wonder why we wouldn't want to understand formalisms (like voice leading exercises) as part of our experience of the musical repertoire they are based upon. These abstractions capture a particular view of musical structure and therefore can become an integral part of musical listening and experience.

The most significant aspect of the uneasy relationship between repertoire and formalism is that it exists as a dynamic in the first place and has—for better or worse—shaped the way we think about music, music theory, and music theory pedagogy. There are myriad ways in which to theorize this relationship, and teachers of music theory will rely more heavily on some than on others. In the case of the Haydn finale, we could use the properties of the inverted subdominant to explain its role in the opening passage, or we might use the passage as an exemplar to demonstrate some larger point about harmony. Alternatively, we might ask our students to improvise a two-part, classical phrase at the piano; in this case, the first two measures of the Haydn example are a specific instance of how one might handle an opening, and the rules of its voice leading are tools for understanding the groundwork of the passage in generalizable terms. No matter the desired relationship, it should go without saying that an articulation thereof is a basic part of our pedagogy.

[21] Peter Schubert, "Global Perspective on Music Theory Pedagogy: Thinking in Music," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 25 (2011): 217–232.

[22] Schubert, "Global Perspective on Music Theory Pedagogy," 230.

[23] Hali Fieldman, review of *Harmony in Context* by Miguel Roig-Francoli; *The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening* by Steven G. Laitz; *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis* by Jane Piper Clendinning and Elizabeth West Marvin, *Music Theory Spectrum* 30, no. 2 (2008): 366–382 at 379.

In addition to this, though, we ought to consider the incorporation of another important layer: we owe our undergraduates an explanation of the reasons that we create knowledge about music through a system of relays between repertoire and formalism at all. This entails a discussion of formalism as a practice that we can engage in and disengage from. Jonathan Loesberg, writing about literary scholarship, notes that the practice of formalism often requires the "temporary acceptance of disciplinary enclosure" or "voluntary askesis."[24] Once inside the system, there is a discretionary detachment that allows formalism to do the work that it does. Most important in Loesberg's observation, however, is that the enclosure or askesis is voluntary and temporary. We need a way of theorizing the interface between our formalisms and other ways of knowing. If we want to understand tonality through such formalisms as voice leading exercises, rules for model composition, and so on, we need to demonstrate for our students that this entire system of relationships is itself a deliberate methodological choice that sets in motion certain points of inquiry and forestalls others. As such, it is a practice that we voluntarily agree to initiate—and thereby temporarily separate ourselves from other ways of knowing—in order to reach the particular types of insights that it affords.

Closer to History

Mary Arlin never let us forget that the production of musical knowledge is deeply imbedded in institutional legacies. Her own interest in and involvement with the histories of Ithaca College, the Society for Music Theory, the Music Theory Society of New York State, and of music theory itself attest to her deep and ongoing interest in how these institutions function. Arlin's simultaneous insistence on a rigorously formal practice in the classroom and a careful historicization of that practice are not at odds whatsoever. As Barthes once told us, "the more a system is specifically defined in its forms, the more amenable it is to historical criticism… a little formalism turns one away from History, but… a lot brings one back to it."[25] Barthes's oft-repeated maxim bears repeating here because it characterizes formalist practice as one component of

[24] Jonathan Loesberg, "Cultural Studies, Victorian Studies, and Formalism," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27 (1999): 540-541.

[25] Roland Barthes, "Myth as a Semiological System," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972), 111.

an analytical system with high standards for comprehensiveness (the type of standards Arlin is known for upholding). As Barthes goes on to say, "the important thing is to see that the unity of an explanation cannot be based on the amputation of one or other of its approaches."[26] Historical work is incomplete without formalist inquiry, and formalisms open up possibilities to do historical work.

The practice of formal abstraction in music theory pedagogy presents the opportunity to inquire about the ways in which our knowledge of music has been conditioned. Consider the formal abstractions made with regard to the Haydn example discussed above. At issue are the passage's tonal strategy, harmonic function, and contrapuntal design. Each one of these topics points beyond the example to a number of rich intellectual genealogies that have come to bear on our conceptualization and hearing of Haydn's music.

The selection of the passage as an example of tonic expansion, to begin with, draws on the methods of linear analysis and on Schenkerian theory in particular. If the goal of introducing this excerpt is to show how the triad built on the fourth scale degree can serve to prolong the tonic—rather then lead to the dominant—then the lesson is much more about tonality and function than it is about Haydn. This framework suggests questions such as: "how can we harmonize $\hat{4}$ when it serves as a passing tone between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{5}$ within the tonic area?" In this case Haydn's music is the answer rather than the progenitor of the question, even as the framework for discussing it allows us to hear the passage in new ways. There is more than just Schenkerian heritage to this type of thinking: on a deeper level the focus on the subdominant triad's properties is a feature of scale-degree theory, in which harmonies receive their identification and place within the system based on the scale-degree of their root. This tradition's legacy reaches back to the early nineteenth-century writings of Gottfried Weber.[27] In other respects, though, the idea that the subdominant triad does different work within tonic expansion than it does in dominant preparation borrows from the notion that harmonies have different

[26] Barthes, "Myth as a Semiological System," 111.

[27] Gottfried Weber, *Versuch einer geordneten Theorie der Tonsetzkunst*, 3 vols. (Mainz, B. Schott, 1817-1821). On the historiography of tonal theory in general, see Bryan Hyer, "Tonality," in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 726–752.

functions in different musical contexts that relate to their resolution and their role within progressions. This concept has Riemannian shadings and owes much to Rameau.[28] It is now commonplace for our contemporary college music theory curricula to build simultaneously on these different traditions of linear analysis, scale-degree theory, and harmonic function. The material that results is a productive mixture that is indebted to all of them.

Contrapuntal traditions also contribute to our understanding of the short excerpt from Haydn. The contrary motion of the outer voices is desirable insofar as it is understood to reflect the standard desiderata of eighteenth-century counterpoint. Within these criteria, Haydn's pairing of $\hat{3}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{5}$ against $\hat{1}$, $\hat{6}$, $\hat{3}$ is particularly successful, since the conjunct ascent of the melody compliments the gapped descent in the bass. Haydn's bass line neither mimics the melody's conjunct motion nor creates too disjunct of a line against it. As Aldwell and Schachter note, a descending bass line of $\hat{1}$, $\hat{6}$, $\hat{1}$ (in the progression I-IV^6-I) leaves too large of a descending leap between the second and third bass pitches.[29] Haydn's counterpoint also avoids the odd angularity (and awkward voice leading) that would result from a bass line ascent from the $\hat{6}$ of IV^6 to the higher $\hat{3}$ of the following I^6. Finally, the counterpoint of the excerpt works together with its durations and meter. The passing $\hat{4}$ in the melody falls on the weak beat of the first measure and the appropriately emphasized $\hat{5}$ on the following downbeat. All of these elements of Haydn's musical logic are apparent within the guiding principles of eighteenth-century counterpoint—a tradition famously codified by Fux with a much older heritage in the music of the sixteenth century.[30]

The use of the inverted subdominant within tonic expansion makes musical sense to many of us. Haydn's opening measures appeal to our musical intuitions as coherent and graceful. Cultivating these intuitions in our students, we draw on the traditions that have shaped our own. A basic lesson like this one, appropriate

[28] Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Génération harmonique* (Paris: Prault fils, 1737); Hugo Riemann, *Vereinfachte Harmonielehre* (London: Augener, 1893).

[29] Aldwell and Schachter with Cadwallader, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 233-234.

[30] Johann Joseph Fux, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Vienna: Johann Peter van Ghelen, 1725).

for first-year theory students, offers us countless opportunities to explore the intellectual allegiances that have informed our thinking and listening. If we uncover these allegiances for our students, we have the chance to demonstrate the multiplicity of approaches to musical style and structure that are available. Foregrounding the plurality of intellectual heritages that have supported these ways of knowing has the benefit of forcing us to articulate which of them we are disposed to, the reasons why, and the ways in which they have conditioned our knowledge. Students, given the opportunity to see how knowledge on music is organized in formal systems that are historically contingent, can then recognize their own place within the system.

In a useful piece on debate in the music theory classroom, Matthew Bribitzer-Stull suggests that even the most basic concepts of music theory can lend themselves to critical engagement and productive dialogue among students.[31] Taking a cue from him, I suggest that we push the notion of critical engagement still further. We ought to explain to our students where music theoretical knowledge comes from, what its histories are, who makes it, and why we believe in it. Asking our students to understand, articulate, and assess the various positions from which knowledge on music is constructed provides them with a sense of ownership over the claims about music they will learn to assert; it can empower them to make decisions about how they will acquire further knowledge on music. If we want music theory pedagogy to do more than simply disseminate the received wisdom, then we need to fold our undergraduates into the process of evaluating the formalisms we teach them. They need to understand that formal voice leading abstractions are a powerful practice that we chose to engage in for a reason, rather than a requirement for graduation. If we are indeed committed to the work that the enclosure of formalism is able to accomplish for us, then we should be inspired to demonstrate that work for our students in discussion and debate, allow them to understand why we have chosen to systematize knowledge on music in the ways that we have, and explain to them how the power of formalist analysis can transform our understanding, hearing, and performance of music. This metacritical level of engagement sets the stage for the type of skills that transfer across disciplinary

[31] Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, "Contention in the Classroom: Encouraging Debate and Alternate Readings in the Undergraduate Theory Class," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 17 (2003): 21–58.

boundaries. Music theory can and should be the type of subject that prepares students for a lifetime of active, engaged, and critical analysis of the world around them.

Nothing halfway

Early on in that first semester with Mary Arlin our class was assigned a page of interval writing. Working quickly and with false confidence, I dashed off the intervals with ease, sure that I knew all the answers. When Arlin handed our assignments back, I was shocked to see that I had received a grade of 50%. Red strokes ran through each pitch I had notated, but not because any of them indicated an incorrect interval. In my haste, I had not drawn the note stems to the appropriate length. I have never thought casually about notation again.

I pass this story on to all of my undergraduates, not only because it makes an impression on them and generally cleans up their stems and note heads, but more importantly because it captures the studied commitment of a tenacious scholar and teacher. To say that Arlin taught me music theory is to miss the point. Arlin taught me to be committed to music theory.

Commitment, it seems, is related to the practice of formalism in certain important ways. Because formalisms require us to focus on some materials at the expense of others—Loesberg's "temporary enclosure"—they necessitate an avowal of intent. This is clear in the literature on the New Formalism, which is characterized by its many affirmations and re-dedications to the formalist practice. In order to turn momentarily away from contextualism or to think beyond it, scholars in the New Formalist movement provide us with an assurance about their activities in the form of a pledge to their method. In this sense, formalism begins to look like a specific kind of commitment itself. As Kaufman has it, "formalism… has also been a name for commitments to the modes by which the irreducibly formal dynamics of aesthetic experience enable us to sense an at once affective and intellectual capacity crucial to critical agency."[32] By this view, one could call music theory a kind of commitment to music.

In a set of meditations on commitment and formalism, W. J. T. Mitchell suggests some nuance in the relationship between the two, and distinguishes the act of making a commitment from the

[32] Kaufman, "Everybody Hates Kant," 207–208.

circumstance of being committed. While making a commitment is a behavior one elects, being committed is a state in which one finds oneself. For Mitchell, literary scholarship has always been committed to form and formalisms without having known it, or without having expressed its commitment explicitly. In his view, formalism will continue to return in various guises, and continue to shape our thinking whether we are conscious of it or not.[33] Given the intellectual history of music theory, this would seem to be true for our discursive practice as well. We return again and again to systematicity, generalizability, and the power of abstraction. Perhaps we will find that we have always been committed to formalism.

I would like to suggest that there is room for us to go a step further than being committed. It is not enough to uphold our commitment to music theory's formalisms in the classroom. We need to make our commitments explicit, articulate them to our students, and require that they understand our reasons for them. In order to provide them with the full scope of music theoretical engagement—in order to do nothing halfway—we need to explain that formalism is a practice that we chose to engage in, momentarily entering its boundaries in order to experience its powerful effects. Theorizing the place of formalism in the classroom allows us to investigate our commitment itself and involve our students in the critical process. In so doing, we create an opportunity for more theory, and for more commitment to music.

[33] Mitchell, "The Commitment to Form; or, Still Crazy after All These Years."

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