THE SCHENKERIAN ANALYSIS
IN THE MODERN CONTEXT OF THE MUSICAL ANALYSIS
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Abstract: - Music analysis represents the most useful way of exploration and innovation of musical interpretations. Performers who use music analysis efficiently will find it a valuable method for finding the kind of musical richness they desire in their interpretations. The use of Schenkerian analysis in performance offers a rational basis and an unique way of interpreting music in performance.

Key-Words: - Schenkerian analysis, structural hearing, prolongation, progression, modernity.

1 Introduction
Musical analysis is a musicological approach in order to determine the structural components of a musical text, the technical development of the discourse, the morphological descriptions and the understanding of the meaning of the work. Analysis has complete autonomy in the context of the musicological disciplines as the music philosophy, the musical aesthetics, the compositional technique, the music history and the musical criticism.

2 Problem Formulation
Schenkerian analysis is probably the most spread approach in analyzing tonal music (at least in the English-speaking world). In the last decades, there have been many attempts to apply Schenkerian analysis to other musical traditions than the one it was created for (tonal music). These attempts include medieval and Renaissance music, Western folk music, non-Western music and Western popular music.

3 Problem Solution
Schenker's approach is based on his argument that much of contemporary performance practice is rooted in the nineteenth-century cult of the virtuoso, which has resulted in an overemphasis on technical display. To counter this, he proposes specific ways to reconnect the composer's intentions and the musician's performance.

Even in a simple piece of piano music, the ear hears a vast number of notes, many of them played simultaneously. The situation is similar to that found in language. Although music is quite different to spoken language, most listeners will still group the different sounds they hear into motifs, phrases and even longer sections.

Schenker was not afraid to criticize what he saw as a general lack of theoretical and practical understanding amongst musicians. As a dedicated performer, composer, teacher and editor of music himself, he believed that the professional practice of all these activities suffered from serious misunderstandings of how tonal music works. He gradually developed his theory in order to remedy this situation, which he feared was causing the death of the Austro-German tradition that he loved (the music of Bach through Mozart to Beethoven and beyond).

Most of Schenker's theory is culturally, stylistically specific: the availability of just a few forms of the fundamental structure, the voice-leading principles, and the emphasis on triads, among other constraints, make it applicable just to a very specific repertoire. In fact, Schenker only analyses German instrumental music of the 18th and 19th centuries, mainly by Händel, J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms. The only exceptions are the foreign composers Chopin and Scarlatti and the vocal music by J. S. Bach (chorales) and Schubert and Schumann (lieder).
In spite of this fact, Schenker assumed his theory to have universal validity. As based on nature, the harmonic series would be applicable to any good music. Therefore, Schenker believes that only the music above mentioned is good music. He did not consider non-classical music, considering music before 1700 to be just an early stage which would lead later to “true” music. He also rejected the composers of his own time and derided most European non-German music, especially Italian opera.

Those who practice Schenkerian analysis do not assume these aesthetic implications nowadays. They acknowledge Schenker’s theory to be culturally specific and, as such, only applicable to a very limited repertoire. Attempts of application to other kinds of music are considered by theorists to require important adaptations in the theory.

Schenker’s theory aims to explain the organic coherence of the “best” pieces of the so-called “common-practice” tonal music, though Schenker did not use this term. In short, this coherence is mainly achieved through directed tonal motion, where the relationship between dominant and tonic harmonies is the basic principle, as synthesized in the fundamental structure. Therefore, the main assumption Schenker makes is the subordination of some sounds to others as their elaborations, and the correspondence of this phenomenon at different levels of musical structure. This assumption permits Schenker to represent music in a hierarchy of levels from foreground to background, or to generate music from background to foreground, as he does in his Free Composition. Other important assumptions concern: the nature of structural harmonies, which must be triadic and diatonic; the fundamental line, which must be a step-wise descent from \( ^\text{4} \), \( ^\text{5} \) or \( ^\text{3} \) to \( ^\text{1} \) in an octave and the application of the rules of counterpoint, such as the generation of dissonances from motions between consonances and the prohibition of parallel fifths and octaves, at all hierarchical levels.

Schenker believed that much of the responsibility for the general poor understanding of music lay with other theorists and critics, and the greater part of his early work was concerned with correcting the mistakes. His theory aimed to clarify and correct existing theories of harmony and counterpoint before bringing them together as a comprehensive theory of tonal music.

Schenker's main purpose was to improve the understanding of music amongst musicians, but he also tried to develop an analytical system that would bear comparison with other traditionally more rigorous disciplines.

Schenker regarded his analyses as tools to be used by performers for a deeper understanding of the works they were performing. Schenkerian analysis is more than an abstract explanation, being able to form an integral part of one's interpretation of a musical work, whether as performer, writer, or teacher.

In any piece, Schenkerian analysis should reveal compositional purposes, musical and extra musical associations, and ideas to bring into one's listening experience of the piece. “Functions” are thus the effects of following or breaking rules mentioned earlier, in connection with contrapuntal practice. In this light, it is important to affirm that a Schenkerian view of hierarchical levels is that the higher, more abstract levels of an analysis bear a metaphorical relationship with the musical surface. That is, they are a way of understanding the surface as a complex combination (prolongation) of simpler musical ideas represented by different middleground graphs according to the analysts’ musical intuitions and insights. Thus, it is important for analysts to try out multiple readings of a piece, and work on incorporating the richness provided by each into a sort of meta-reading of the surface.

Functions can be any aspect of a Schenkerian graph including the “effect of being passing”, or more simple functions such as Riemannian chord function, or a passage's function as a development of the main motives of the piece, or the extra musical associations of a passage, or any other kind of musical insights that come from thorough analysis. It is important for a listener to be making associations between structures in the music and structures in the mind: in one's knowledge of musical patterns, rudiments, and fundamental structures, in one's memory of different musical ideas and patterns in this and other musical works, and in one's understanding of extra musical ideas, structures, and metaphors.

Established techniques of musical analysis were developed for application to scores, and as a result are of limited value to the study of music in either live or recorded performance. Both Schenkerian and motivic approaches have emphasized synchronic rather than diachronic relationships, resulting in a poor match with the highly time-based concerns of performers. The score-based approach has also brought with it an aesthetic of unity, which is not only potentially old-fashioned (because of its origins in nineteenth-century organicism) but also orientated towards the concerns of composers rather than performers. Finally, it focused on those aspects
of music that are captured by notation, whereas the interpretive practice of performers lies largely in those dimensions which notation does not capture. The combined result has been a tendency to understand performance as a reproduction of compositional relationships, which represents an inadequate model of the purposes of performance or the manner in which listeners experience performances.

In the classical tradition, there is a close connection between the techniques and values of composition and those of performance: it is therefore appropriate to attempt the adaptation of established analytical techniques for the study of performance.

Schenkerian analysis unveils a "deep structure" of the music, which reduces a whole composition or movement to a few important "structural" events. This deep structure, the fundamental structure of Schenker’s background, symbolizes a clear sense of directed motion from the beginning to the end of the piece. The attempts to extend Schenker’s theory leave its most specific principles and try to retain the general structural framework of Schenkerian analyses, the hierarchical, generative, transformation-based structure, which is often understood as having universal validity. However, much of what is usually assumed to be universally applicable, in fact originates from aesthetic norms tied up with tonal music.

Schenker’s theory emphasizes the fact that music tells us a story, with its beginning, development, and end, a complete story, which does not need any other source than the music itself to be meaningful. However, this kind of sustained musical flow is not characteristic of all music. Even when dealing with this absolute music, there are some problems in the application of this theory. It focuses on harmony and voice leading at a large level and considers any other musical parameters of musical form to be secondary or “surface” events. The deep structure on which it is based is not an obvious musical event; it must be discovered through analysis, and its effects on the music are not easily perceivable, except in the case of very short compositions. By contrast, the “secondary” parameters can be much more obvious. Therefore, these theories are the more useful when the these parameters of musical form enhance the deep structure, that is, when, for example, in the classical sonata form “the tonal plan [...] governs the disposition of themes and textures, the patterning of loud and soft and high and low, the pacing of climax and relaxation” [4].

It seems that even for classical music, the search for deep structures by means of harmony and voice leading is just one of the possible ways to organize large-scale structure. Considering the repertory that Schenker’s theory focuses on, the existence of this kind of organization of musical structure does not mean that music must be perceived in a way that emphasizes this large-structure.

The idea of analysis focusing almost exclusively on purely musical, audible facts which lies at the core of Schenker’s theory, is strongly cultural-specific, and the translation of this idea to other musical cultures creates the risk of neglecting more important features of their music.

In order to apply Schenkerian analysis to performance interpretation, the performer has to conceptualize the role of analysis in performance – the ideal of applied analysis. A musician who has such a full understanding of the effects and functions will exhibit the richness of the analysis in the performance of the work. A performer who understands and can hear the relationship between a recurring melodic fragment and an underlying hidden parallelism will play the music differently and more communicatively than one who simply has so-called “musical intuition” about the way the music should be interpreted. Analysis is thus a tool for bringing interpretive insights into focus and allowing them to be communicated either verbally or aurally in performance.

The ideal of applied analysis, formulated in terms of its relevance to performance issues, its precision in giving performance suggestions, and its capability of offering positive instructions, guides the examination of theoretical works of Schenker himself and of other theorists, and sets the direction for performance interpretations. The structural features discovered from Schenkerian analysis are found to be relevant and decisive in performance issues such as articulation, temporal nuance, dynamic shading, and the like. The precision of performance suggestions depends on the terms used in one's verbalization. Schenker and other theorists achieve with varying degrees of success in this respect. The ways of giving performance suggestions, of Schenker himself and other theorists, are mostly positive even though some of the suggestions are ambiguous. Interestingly, some theorists tend to make performance suggestions in a negative way that telling performers what not to do. However, performance suggestions, not intended to be binding, should be given positively to avoid ambiguity and abstraction. The originality offered
by the analysis and the performance suggestions should not be underestimated.

The performer’s task is to strip the concept of motif of the inappropriate assumptions of score-based analysis, and to extend it to those dimensions, which are of particular concern to both performers and listeners (whose experiences are as much molded by the performance as by the works that are performed). The result should be a more theoretically informed approach to the understanding of recorded performances than is currently available.

Heinrich Schenker's The Art of Performance shows this great music theorist in a new light. Filled with concrete examples and numerous suggestions, the book is interesting for both music theorists and practicing performers.

Schenker shows how performers can benefit from understanding the laws of composition. He demonstrates how a literal interpretation of the composer's indications can be self-defeating, and he provides a lively discussion of piano technique, including suggestions for pedal, sound color, orchestral effects, and balance. He devotes separate chapters to non-legato, legato, fingering, dynamics, tempo, and rests. In addition to the examples for pianists, Schenker covers a number of topics, such as bowing technique that will prove invaluable for other instrumentalists and for conductors. [2] The book ends with an aphoristic and expressive chapter on practicing.

Some of the world’s greatest pianists that use schenkerian analysis for their performances read this book. Murray Perahia says about The Art of Performance that "This volume where Schenker gives advice to performers in general, pianists in particular, on how to fulfill the demands inherent in those layers of musical material behind the foreground is a very helpful adjunct to his profound analyses. There are some very ingenious, unusual, and helpful ideas that can give life to, and must be used in conjunction with, his analytical visions." Richard Goode thinks that "This brief work is the most illuminating guide to performance and interpretation I have read. It gives new life to essential, too often neglected principles of music making, and points the way toward a flexible style of playing that grows directly out of the intrinsic qualities of the music. Properly understood, Schenker's liberating insight will inspire musicians to realize the composer's wishes in freer, more imaginative and meaningful ways."

While Heinrich Schenker's theoretical writings helped transform music theory, this book portrays his experience as a musician and teacher to suggest a sharp reevaluation of how musical compositions are realized in performance.

Many musicians have discovered that schenkerian principles, correctly applied, open musical insights not obtainable from other methods of analysis. Musical analysis from the schenkerian point of view – musical and analytical – lies at the core of all musical studies (intuitive or intellectual).

Schenkerian analysis reveals connections among tones that are not readily apparent. Direction and precise functions of tones and chords are in relation to the structure of tonal music. Whatever the style, the basic characteristics of musical direction, continuity and coherence are the same and represent the universal denominator.

Schenkerian analysis is a subjective method of analysis that reflects the musical intuitions of the analyst, because there is no mechanical procedure of analysis. Many of the analysts and performers consider that the analysis represents a way of hearing a piece of music. Schenker himself was certain that a tonal masterpiece contains an inner truth-content, while few are sufficiently gifted to appreciate it. Although it is a subject of debate among music theorists whether there is a single correct hearing and analysis of a piece of tonal music, even those who hold that, agree that the analysis can only be arrived at and evaluated subjectively by a professional listener.

Schenker's approach is grounded in the fundamental principles of harmony and counterpoint and requires a solid development of the musical aptitudes and ear. Therefore, learning how to perform Schenkerian analysis is above all else learning a way of hearing and understanding tonal music, and it requires study and practice.

Heinrich Schenker’s analytical approach of music engages looking beneath the surface of music in order to understand how it connects into larger spans. It is important for the performer to reflect on the direction and shape of the phrases, in a natural and logical way. At the basic level, Schenker's ideas can be understood as a formalization of his intuitive thinking that music should not be regarded as a series of notes, but in terms of larger-scale shapes and patterns.

The basic method of Schenkerian analysis is to show how music can be grouped into elaborations such as neighbor and passing notes, progressions and arpeggios. These patterns do not appear only on the surface of the music but that they also span much larger fragments.

Schenker regarded music like a superposition of layers/levels, the surface layer being the elaboration of a simpler layer beneath that surface. The surface
of the music is called the foreground, the deepest layer the background and those layers of elaborations in between are referred to as the middleground. In addition, an important feature of Schenkerian analysis is showing how melodic figures are elaborations of harmonies.

The basic ideas stated by Schenker in his theory are quite simple, but the process of analysis is a complicated one, mostly because music itself is complex. Analysts that approached this kind of analysis found that it provides richly rewarding insights into the shape and structure of tonal music.

Schenker is probably most notorious for his suggestion that musical works can eventually be understood as elaborations of the basic model that he called the Ursatz. This is a two-voice structure that may seem excessively reductive, but it forms that basis for an analytical approach that emphasizes the essential simplicity of tonal music, showing how pieces are basically contrapuntal elaborations of a tonic chord. Schenker stated that we could reduce a piece of music to the Ursatz, and we can explore the complexities of the piece by considering them in relation to this simple model.

Some theorists (like Steven Porter (2002)) that approached schenkerian analysis referred to grammar in order to explain the principles of Schenker’s theories, taking into consideration that notes and chords that belong to a musical phrase are like words into a sentence. A word can be analyzed as a part of speech, having, in the same time, a function within the sentence.

Felix Salzer (1952) introduced a concept that describes very well the schenkerian analysis: *structural hearing*. He considered that the understanding of tonal music is a matter of hearing, and the ear has to be trained to hear not only a succession of tones (sounds), melodic lines and chord progressions, but also their coherence and structural signification.

Schenker’s conceptions are based on an observation that represents the corner stone of his research: the distinction of the “chord grammar” and “chord signification” [6]. “Chord grammar” signifies the usual method of analysis, this being the most important feature of a harmonic analysis that has the purpose of status recognition of the chords in a musical piece. On the other hand, the study of “chord signification” shows his specific role in a phrase, or an entire piece. Schenker discovered that the roles that chords have are diverse. Two identical chords that appear in the same phrase can fulfill different functions. The signification and the function of a sound or of a chord depend on the direction of the movement and on the purpose, in other words on the context.

Schenker made a distinction between structure chords and prolongation chords, by means of chord grammar and signification, taking into consideration the direction of music – this being the main idea of his approach. Salzer considered that this method of understanding the movement of music represents the instinctive perception of a truly musical ear; this can be called “structural hearing”. The structural outline and framework work signifies the main movement to its goal, showing the shortest way to it. Nevertheless, the tension of music consists in modifications, expansions and elaborations – called prolongations of the structure, and the artistic coherence can be fully appreciated if their basic direction has been understood.

The distinction between structure and prolongation led Schenker to a new conception of the functions of harmony and counterpoint in creating organic unity: *not all chords is of harmonic origin*, this statement having an effect on understanding the music.

Schenker’s harmony explains the tonal system like a group of major triads derived from the harmonic series, like a vertical aspect of music. His theories of counterpoint show the way that simple progressions can be ornamented following simple rules based on the succession of consonant and dissonant intervals, like a horizontal aspect of the music. In *Free Composition* (1953), Schenker explains the way that harmony and counterpoint are combined in tonal compositions. Using the basic principles of consonance and dissonance from the species counterpoint, Schenker identifies a number of common linear units that he named diminutions, showing, by means of concrete analyses, the way that these linear units prolong harmonic units. The concept of prolongation is the base of the schenkerian theories and because the diminutions have to prolong a harmonic unity, just a consonant tone with the harmony can give rise to a diminution.

Beside the structural and prolongation roles or the diverse functions that chords can have, they can have harmonic or contrapuntal importance. A chord performs a harmonic function in the context of a fundamental progression. Schenker considers that the term “harmony” should only be used only for members of a harmonic progression; these are “harmonies” in the true sense of the word, because they are connected on the basis of a harmonic association (Salzer, 1953). Chords not based on harmonic associations are products of motion, direction, and embellishment and have a horizontal tendency. Harmonic chords are also structural.
chords (they constitute the structural framework), and the contrapuntal ones are chords of prolongation (they prolong and elaborate the space between members of harmonic progressions).

4 Conclusion

The musicological analysis is intended to be objective, impartial, concerned to describe rather than give value, and the schenkerian analysis is a very good application of this idea, but each musicologist has his own mental schemes operating with its culture, his own personality and artistic profile. The distinction between the formal analysis – which includes the schenkerian analysis - and stylistic analysis it's clear in the practical field, but there is a theoretical difficulty, because any object can be regarded as a complete musical fact. Any stylistic analysis uses comparative methods that splits the structure into its components - which constitute the primary analytical work -, the fundamental aspect in the schenkerian analysis [5].

References: