

CU Boulder Theory Colloquia
Fall 2016 - Spring 2017

The Theory Department thanks Bill Elliott for his generous support of our colloquium series.

September 26

Bryan Christian, University of Northern Colorado

“Casting the Death Mask of Claude Vivier’s *Glaubst du an die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*.”

Abstract: In the final measures of Quebecois composer Claude Vivier’s final work – *Glaubst du an die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (*Do You Believe in the Immortality of the Soul*; 1983) – a narrator describes how a man named Claude was stabbed through the heart, which served as an eerie premonition of Vivier’s actual murder by stabbing. In light of this biographical context and lack of a double bar or signature, many scholars, most notably Vivier’s biographer Bob Gilmore, consider this work unfinished.

However, in the light of archival evidence I uncovered at the archives of the Université de Montréal, I show how Vivier’s conception of *Glaubst du* evolved over time and I argue that the work is in fact finished. I illuminate these sketch studies with a hermeneutical reading of *Glaubst du* to show that this work displays elements consistent with Vivier’s compositional approach in his late works. The lack of the double bar, then, no longer indicates that the piece is unfinished, but rather is part of the larger devices typical in Vivier’s output.

Finally, I draw on Richard Kramer’s work on unfinished music and Walter Benjamin’s concept of the death mask (“The work is the death mask of its conception”) to discuss the implications for arguing that a work of art is complete. My work is important to scholarship in American music because it provides closure for both this important work in Vivier’s output and, in a sense, his life.

Bio: Bryan Christian is an Adjunct Instructor of Music Theory at the University of Northern Colorado and a Special Assistant Professor of Music at Colorado State University. Christian received his Ph.D. from Duke University in 2015. His research focuses on the music of Quebecois post-spectral composer Claude Vivier and his publications have appeared in *Music Theory Online* and *Tempo*. Christian has a forthcoming article on Vivier for Grove Music Online/Oxford Music Online and he is the editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Spectral Music* with Oxford University Press.

October 17

William Marvin, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester

“Wagner and the Uses of Convention? *La Solita Forma* in *Die Feen* through Lohengrin”

Abstract: Analytic approaches to Wagner’s pre-*Ring* operas have emphasized his developing use of *leitmotivic* technique, associative and expressive tonal deployment, and “symphonic” continuity across long spans of music. While it is useful to track early appearances of these innovations associated with Wagner’s style, surprisingly few studies have examined individual set pieces to place his early works in historical context, and fewer have discussed Wagner’s use

of Italian multi-movement conventions to articulate larger musical numbers in succession. It is well known that Wagner was surrounded by Italian *bel canto* repertoire as a young aspiring musician, and his first efforts to establish himself as a conductor and arranger involved direct contact with much relevant Italian and French repertoire. In this paper, analyses from Wagner's first six operas demonstrate that Wagner utilized the formal conventions of Italian opera, including clearly articulated *cabalettas*, far more frequently than has previously been noted. The conventional Italian form accounts for one-third to one-half of musical numbers in Wagner's first six operas. While the paper will present multiple examples from each opera, the first act finale from *Lohengrin* demonstrates the point here: King Henry's prayer "Mein Herr und Gott, nun ruf' ich dich" (tonally closed in E-flat) represents a static *cantabile* movement; Lohengrin's duel with Telramund is the kinetic *tempo di mezzo*, and the celebratory chorus begun by Elsa at "O fänd' ich Jubelweisen deinem Ruhme gleich" (tonally closed in B-flat) is a *cabaletta/stretto* finale. The paper concludes by identifying vestiges of *la solita forma* in the later music dramas.

Bio: William Marvin joined the Eastman faculty in 2002 after having taught music theory and aural skills at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music. Marvin's work in theory has focused on problems of tonality according to Schenkerian definitions as exemplified in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; examinations of form and tonal structure in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*; aural training in tonal and post-tonal music; sonata deformation in Mahler's Third Symphony; improvisation in nineteenth-century French organ music; off-tonic beginnings and endings; and the quodlibet as a contrapuntal device in Broadway musicals. He has presented papers at international, national, and regional conferences. His published work can be found at *Music Theory Online*, *Journal of Musicology*, *Intégral*, *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy*, and in several books edited by Deborah Stein (OUP), Matthew Bribitzer-Stull (Palgrave-Schirmer), and Gordon Sly (Ashgate).

October 24

Suzannah Clark, Harvard University

"Weber's Rest"

Abstract: A curious rest appears in one of the hundreds of music examples that Gottfried Weber employed to make his case about how the ear comprehends the key of a musical passage or work and how modulation and key relations are to be understood. This rest ought to have signaled to Weber that something was amiss with his newly devised foundation for the major-minor system. Yet he tenaciously kept it in place, leaving numerous other gaps in numerous other examples and charts of chords and keys. Ultimately, it influences how he engaged in Roman numeral analysis—the analytical method which he is credited with refining. Similarly, the appearance of this rest restricts his notion of *Mehrdeutigkeit* (multiple meaning) in ways that are likely to be counterintuitive to modern listeners. The first part of my paper will explain the theoretical context of Weber's rest, and the second part will investigate its analytical consequences and implications for a history of musical perception.

Bio: Suzannah Clark is Professor of Music and Chair of the Music Department at Harvard University. Before joining Harvard in 2008, she was at Oxford University, first as a Junior Research Fellow and British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow and then as a faculty member from 2000-2008. She specializes in the history of theory, the music of Franz Schubert, and thirteenth-

century vernacular music. Her book *Analyzing Schubert* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2011. She is the recipient of numerous fellowships, most recently she spent last year at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where she was also supported by an ACLS fellowship. Her current book project is *Quirks in Tonality: Aspects in the History of Tonal Spaces*, and her paper today is drawn from this book. The title of her paper is “Weber’s Rest.”

February 20

Mitchell Ohriner, Denver University

“Flow-Beat Incongruence in the Rapping of Black Thought”

Abstract: Listeners and practitioners of rap music often divide the music between “the flow” (i.e., the rhythmic features of the rapping voice created by the emcee) and “the beat” (i.e., the accompanying instrumental streams created by the deejay or producer). Much of the discourse on rap music argues that flows and beat are congruent, that emcees construct their flows to highlight aspects of the rhythmic structure of beats.

My aim in this paper is to expand the range of relationships that might obtain between flows and beats. Using the emcee Black Thought of The Roots as an exemplar, I will show several cases in which Black Thought’s flow is at odds with the accompanying beats. Further, I will speculate on the impact of this incongruence both for listeners and for the unfolding narrative of the verse. By drawing attention to flow-beat interaction and arguing for a greater range of relationships between them, I hope to model an analytical method applicable to the many genres of music that are collaboratively composed.

Bio: Mitchell Ohriner is an alumnus of the University of Colorado Boulder, having earned his bachelor’s in composition here. He obtained his Ph.D. in music theory from Indiana University in 2011, and has taught at Washington University in St. Louis, MO and Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA. Now he returns to our area, joining the faculty of the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver just this year. His work embraces performance, analysis, and cognition research, focused on the phenomenon of expressive timing. More recently he has examined how theories of rhythm in meter can illuminate the concept of “flow” in rap music.

Dr. Ohriner has published articles in *Music Theory Online*, *Empirical Musicology Review*, and the *Indiana Theory Review*, and in 2013 received the Emerging Scholar Award from the Society for Music Theory. At regional, national, and international conferences he has spoken on diverse topics such as social contexts of Mozart piano concertos, rhythmic perception in Bartók’s music, and issues of agency in Schubert’s piano sonatas.

March 20

Brian Alegant, Oberlin College Conservatory

“Re-attacking Two Brahms Puzzles: Analyzing and Performing Brahms’ Op. 116, 4 and 6”

Abstract: This presentation explores the analysis and performance of Brahms’ op. 116, 4 and 6. These movements in E major are noted for their formal and harmonic ambiguity, and they present considerable challenges to analysts and performers alike. I will summarize the received

wisdom on these movements (building on essays by E.T. Cone and Jonathan Dunsby); trace the history of several chromatic motifs and agents; examine the implications of Schenker's notion of an obligatory register; and demonstrate an interpretation or take.