

# MTSE 2023 Conference Abstracts

## **“What Separates a Sonata’s Closing Section from Its Subordinate Theme?”**

**Robert T. Kelley (Lander University)**

Hepokoski and Darcy require a sonata exposition’s subordinate theme to end with the first subordinate-key PAC that is followed by different melodic-motivic material (the EEC). Caplin contends that the music after the first subordinate-key PAC is a closing section only if it does not coalesce into another theme. Both still require at least one subordinate-key PAC to separate the subordinate theme and closing section. Using Caplin’s common characteristics of closing formal function instead of finding PACs to identify closing sections in several examples, I shall make the case that a sonata’s subordinate theme can end with something other than a PAC, and its closing section can begin even before a subordinate-key PAC occurs. The idea that closing function can be separated from the presence of a prior PAC raises larger questions about analysis methodology and what role abstract models should play in the analysis of musical form.

## **“Hearing the Sonata through Fanny Hensel’s Sonata o Capriccio (1824)”**

**Catrina S. Kim (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)**

What does it mean for a single composition to be a sonata or something else? And how might one hear such a piece of music? This paper considers how Hensel’s *Sonata o Capriccio*, scored for solo piano, navigates its dual generic identity. This process is far from straightforward, and Hensel’s use of the conjunction “or” suggests several possibilities. Perhaps it is definitively a sonata or a capriccio, as two mutually exclusive options; it may be both genres at once, capable of being heard as either sonata or capriccio, depending upon which parameters are emphasized; or the composition alternately dialogues with the sonata and the capriccio. As neither sonata nor capriccio is easily apparent, I build a processual analysis, listening with the audience, that considers how each genre pertains to the movement, at times simultaneously, and at times alternately.

## **“Function and Type in the Main Themes of Robert Schumann’s Sonata Forms”**

**Matthew Poon (Oberlin College & Conservatory)**

The last decades have seen new literature on various aspects of Robert Schumann’s large-scale instrumental music. However, most of this literature focuses on

relatively small corpora, necessitating a more holistic consideration of his compositional techniques. Using Caplin's (1998) theory of formal functions, I consider the forty-six main themes that open Schumann's sonata forms. I group them into six types: 1) tight knit, 2) novel concatenations, 3) truncated, 4) teleological, 5) non-tonic, and 6) modulating. Particularly, Types 3–6 represent unique elements of Schumann's style. Truncated themes have their basic idea repetitions cut short and teleological themes begin on non-tonic harmonies; both thus shift their weight towards the end of the theme. Non-tonic and modulating themes avoid the home key entirely, separating main theme function from its space. Together, these six types comprise an expanded formal palette that Schumann employs.

**“Cadential Rhetoric and Separate Agencies: Split-Voice PACs and  
their Impact on Formal Closure in the Music of Dvořák”  
Xieyi (Abby) Zhang (Georgia State University)**

In perfect authentic cadences (PACs), the simultaneous attainment of tonic in bass and melody resolutely marks the end of a musical section. Several pieces by Dvořák, however, complicate this resolution in a unique way: either the bass or melody has completed its own cadential gesture but must wait for the other to catch up. The independent attainment of each cadential goal makes the cadence sufficiently functional, but their misaligned arrival means the melody and bass never resolve together.

This paper investigates Dvořák's split PACs through examples in which either the melody or bass attains its own cadential goal early and maintains a prolongational “holding pattern” until the other cadences. I interpret these split resolutions primarily as moments where instruments agree on the cadential goal but not on when it is reached, while examining pieces in which their misaligned PACs enhance the work's formal narrative.

**“The ‘Nostalgic Sentence’: Historical Contexts and Sample Analyses”  
Ash Stemke (Murray State University)**

The *Nostalgic Sentence* is a specific AAAB formal structure that originated in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century instrumental music and has since appeared in music associated with numerous *nostalgic* traditions such as sporting events, amusement parks, and Broadway. It shares characteristics with Tin Pan Alley's ABAC form, Callahan's large-scale musico-poetic sentences (2013), Baileyshea's “Sentence with a Dissolving Third Statement” (2004) and Richards' “Trifold Sentence” (2011). However, the author argues that the Nostalgic Sentence warrants its own category due to its broader formal level, its signature

harmonic motions, and its unique combination of sentential elements (repetition and continuation) with periodic elements (a “restart” at the halfway point). This paper seeks to establish the Nostalgic Sentence’s AAAB alongside ABAC and AABA as a standard historical form in American music, highlight some of its possible text/music relationships through sample analyses, and suggest directions for further research.

### **“Cue Schemas”**

**Nathaniel Mitchell (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)**

This paper presents a schema theoretical approach to musical cues and the cognitive mechanisms that enable group coordination in live settings. Drawing from cognitive and cross-cultural studies of improvisation, I advance a generalized model of cue schemas consisting of five elements: cue schemas are mental structures that determine a contextually appropriate action by decoding the temporal location and musical content of an upcoming event from a perceived stimulus, aided by information from a musician’s knowledge base and primed by an attention-orienting preparation phase. To illustrate cue schemas in action, I survey live performances of the bluegrass standard “Muleskinner Blues” by Bill Monroe, which poses substantial coordination problems due to its metrical flexibility. By examining how different backing musicians responded to this flexibility, I highlight the ways that cue schemas served to cultivate shared attention to event boundaries, enabling coordinated musical actions in the absence of a fixed metrical structure.

### **“‘Feels Like Something That I’ve Done Before’:**

**Massive Attack’s ‘Dissolved Girl’ Schema”**

**Grace Gollmar (University of Texas at Austin)**

Massive Attack is one of the major groups associated with trip-hop, a genre fusing elements of standard 80s and 90s British hip-hop with timbral components of electronic music, jazz, and dub. This paper considers the popularity of Massive Attack’s 1998 album *Mezzanine* among listeners not otherwise affiliated with hip-hop at large. I identify a timbral/textural feature, which I call the “Dissolved Girl” schema, in which the artists juxtapose genre-typical attributes of a “light,” breathy, and lyrically fragmented vocal feature with the “heavier” timbral and pitch attributes of rock. I track the schema throughout Massive Attack’s discography, from its most normative usage on *Mezzanine* to variants found elsewhere in their output. Considering group members’ observations of the shifting composition of their audiences post-*Mezzanine* toward a whiter and more

rock-identified listener base, I identify this schema as part of a transitional compositional period for the group.

**“Battling Bosses to the Rhythmically Informative Music of Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance” Morgan Weeks (Louisiana State University)**

The 2013 Japanese role-playing video game *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* is one that integrates metal music with intricate boss fights. Using transcriptions, rhythmic analysis, and gameplay analysis, I show that music plays an active role for the player in supporting their movement and strategies in combat gameplay by actively providing information about a boss’s attacks and phases to the player through its rhythmic structures. I analyze three rhythmically and game-mechanically contrasting boss fights, Monsoon, Sundowner, and Samuel. For each boss fight, I analyze select riffs and the metrical levels of those riffs that inform the player of the boss’s different actions, and trace texture changes that inform the player of their progression through the fight with supporting gameplay footage. This study will bring attention to the ongoing discussion on the informative music that can occur during boss fights, a moment when gameplay is at its most technical and difficult.

**“Toward a Theory of General Displacement in Prokofiev’s Music”  
Evan Tanovich (University of Toronto)**

My paper posits a theory of displacement in Prokofiev’s music. I argue that by comparing Prokofiev’s compositions with common practice prototypes created by the composer or an analyst, previously understudied effects in his music, such as uncanniness, are revealed. Such a comparison highlights the presence of seven displacement techniques: chromatic (CD) rhythmic (RD), diatonic (DD), octave (OD), motivic (MD), triadic (TD), and harmonic displacement (HD). I discuss these techniques in excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Peter and the Wolf*, Prokofiev’s sixth thematic notebook, and his Fourth Symphony. I contend that the disjunction between expectations engendered by common practice music (expressed through prototypes) and compositions rich with displacement techniques is yet another way “the repressed familiar [...] emanate[s] in a strangely defamiliarized form”, the Freudian definition of uncanniness (Cohn 2004, 287).

## **“Chord-Member Space and Transformations”**

**Alex Shannon (Indiana University)**

In chromatic music, tonal ambiguity often makes it difficult to describe voice leading in terms of scale-degree motion. In this paper, I propose a model that combines Richard Bass’s (2007) enharmonic-repositioning nomenclature and Steven Rings’s (2011) “heard” scale-degree Generalized Interval System (from Lewin 1987) to describe the voice leading of chromatic chord progressions regarding how voices move between chord members (e.g., root, 3rd). Through this chord-member apparatus, I provide a new analytical lens that allows one to hear changes in vertical placement as characteristic linear gestures, even in progressions that do not convey a clear tonal center. By analyzing the chord-member transformational activity of a sample of ambiguously chromatic nineteenth-century musical passages (from Frédéric Chopin’s Etude in A-flat major, Op. 25, No. 1; and Franz Schubert’s “Die junge Nonne,” D. 828), I show that this system offers a newly instructive way of thinking about chord progressions and voice leading.

## **“‘Comin’ at You at Supersonic Speed’:**

### **Beat and Flow Switches in Contemporary Hip-Hop”**

**John DeBouter (University of Miami)**

Beat and flow switches are uniquely expressive moments in contemporary rap music. They are marked musical events that thwart stylistic expectations and carry distinct rhetorical potentials. In this presentation, I draw and build upon recent scholarship that defines the musical parameters of beat and flow (Geary 2022, Ohriner 2019, Adams 2009), and then assess the impact of beat and flow switches on the listener’s experiences and perceptions to construct a categorization that reflects the different expressive effects of varying flow and beat switch types. I select music from the 2012-2022 decade, including songs by Playboi Carti, Frank Ocean, Tyler, the Creator, Travis Scott, Juice WRLD, Eminem, and Megan Thee Stallion, all of which illustrate a variety of flow and beat switches and consequently a wide range of expressive effects. Through this and categorization, I hope to shed light on the rhetorical potential of a (yet analytically unexplored) compositional and production device in contemporary hip-hop.

## **“From a Musical to Political Resolution:**

### **The Tension of the Tonic Anticipation in Black Pop”**

**Matthew Oliver (The University of North Texas)**

This presentation argues that Black pop music containing overt political messages frequently uses what I call a “tonic anticipation” as an important expressive marker,

particularly in songs written after the Civil-Rights Movement. I define a tonic anticipation as when a pretonic harmony occurs underneath a melody that uses notes from a tonic mode—that is, the root and fifth of a tonic triad along with their stepwise and neutral-third neighbors. A tonic anticipation produces dissonance because the stable ^1 conflicts with most pretonic harmonies, heightening anticipation for resolution. Considering songs by Sam Cook, The Impressions, and Stevie Wonder, I argue that listeners make extra-musical interpretation of the tension the tonic anticipation creates, using lyrical and musical context to determine its positive or negative valence. By considering the tonic anticipation in Black pop, we can appreciate the role of music in some black American's self-definition during the post-civil rights era.

### **"A Posthuman Voice: Vocal Aesthetic and Identity in 2010s Witch House"**

**Tyler Osborne (University of Oregon)**

Since the 1960s, electronic music artists have technologically manipulated their voices in ways that blur boundaries between organic human and synthetic "other." In my presentation, I draw from posthumanist and cyborgfeminist philosophies in tandem with theories of timbre and production to highlight the expressive capacity for human-machine musical hybridization and how the influence of technology distorts perceptions of a gendered vocalic body. Using these perspectives, I investigate two ways that drastic vocal effects can compromise the listener's ability to project a vocalic body when the agent's natural human traits become difficult to pinpoint and how this can expand conceptions of identity. From a posthumanist evaluation, as the natural voice becomes inextricably fused with the musical machine, the singing persona's identity is not compromised, per say, but instead is allowed to ascend beyond conventional notions that arise through Western Humanistic systems.

### **"'Iraq and Roll': Appropriating Rock in Post-9/11 Country Music"**

**Alan Reese (Wake Forest University)**

Numerous scholars have discussed the jingoistic sentiment of several country songs written during the early years of the War on Terror, with most attention focused on lyrical content, critical and commercial reception, and how country's perceived nationalist orientation contrasts with rock's longstanding cultural association with anti-imperialism (Hart 2005, Wolfe and Akenson 2005, Claassen 2009, Jones and Smith 2021). In this presentation, I instead examine how musical elements—particularly timbre, harmony, and form—support a pro-war perspective in selected post-9/11 country songs. Specifically, I explore how stylistic markers of rock and the blues, genres previously

linked to anti-war movements, are appropriated within the country genre as sonic signifiers of patriotism and militarism. Analyzed songs include “This Ain’t No Rag, It’s a Flag” by the Charlie Daniels Band, “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue (The Angry American)” by Toby Keith, and “Iraq and Roll” by Clint Black, among others.

**“Analyzing Patrick Stump’s ‘Soul Voice’:  
Vocal Timbre as a Signifier of Style and Genre”  
Joseph Grunkemeyer (Indiana University)**

Although vocal timbre has received significant analytical attention in recent years, including the development of systematic approaches to analysis by Heidemann (2016) and Malawey (2020) and hermeneutic interpretations of vocal timbre by Wallmark (2014) and Blake (2012), the interaction between vocal timbre and style has not been explored in the current literature. In this paper, I will demonstrate how vocal timbre can be used to understand an artist’s style, as well as track and anticipate future developments in style and changes in genre using an analytical methodology based primarily on Heidemann’s system of embodied analysis, supplemented by Malawey’s descriptive methodology. Two songs from Fall Out Boy’s first four studio albums and three songs from Patrick Stump’s solo album will be selected and separated into two categories, representative and characteristic, the former being songs that represent the overall sound of an album, the latter being songs with unique stylistic and timbral elements. Through the analysis of these selected songs, I will show Stump’s vocal transition from a stereotypical pop-punk singer to a soul-style vocalist. Finally, I will discuss the racial dynamic of Stump, a white man, adopting the musical and vocal styles of soul and funk, which are primarily black genres.

**“Intertextual Rhetoric and Popular Music”  
Dickie Lee (University of Georgia)**

This talk musically explores Kristeva’s description of intertextuality as a “transposition of sign systems.” Extending previous theories of musical intertextuality, I unpack intertextual transposition by analyzing songs through strategies associated with the rhetoric of intertextuality. The resultant through-line underscores intertextuality’s significance in popular music, and the string of analyses I deliver offers a replicable, listener-centric analytical technique for future exploration.

Hatten’s strategic and stylistic intertextuality serve as my musical departure point. Those categories were developed for the study of Western art music yet deconstructing them as a binary allows intertexts to be positioned along a continuum that contains

citation, iteration, and implication. If intertextuality's significance rests in how listeners produce meaning, then exploring its rhetoric offers us the opportunity to rethink a term we all teach in first-year theory: transposition.

**“Intertextual Sampling of Classical Melodies in Pop Music:  
Techniques of Phrase Structural Modification”  
Tiffany Ta (University of California, Santa Barbara)**

Pop artists often engage intertextuality through sampling to signify extramusical ideas that amplify key themes. In some songs, the sampled work is so important the artists integrate the classical melody throughout the song to polyphonically fit new melodies. However, when the sample choice is classical, artists may need to modify phrase structure in order to fit the forms and style typical to their own genre. I investigate two such case studies: Blackpink's "Shut Down" (2022) samples Niccolò Paganini's La Campanella and Nas's "I Can" (2002) samples Ludwig van Beethoven's Für Elise. I identify a few techniques of phrase structural modification: abridgement and repetition of phrasal components, as well as modification of rhythms and cadences.

**Jeremy Robins (Claflin University), “Formal Functions of Melodic Patterns in Popular Music”**

Scholars in popular music continue to wrestle with phrase segmentation, harmonic function, and cadential boundaries. Most rely on a modified view of Rothstein's (1989) approach to phrase boundaries based on directed tonal motion. In modern loop-based music, directed motion is often absent, forcing scholars into alternative methodologies to define formal boundaries and cadential function.

This paper presents a methodology for identifying formal function in popular music based on the metric placement of melodic repetition. I will show examples demonstrating various melodic patterns with an emphasis on unusual patterns, patterns that have multiple layers of ending function, and nested patterns. This approach provides a systematic way to address closure and allows for nuanced interpretations of formal boundaries in popular songs.

**“‘Here is where I’ll end it’: Formal Incompleteness and Death in Popular Song”  
Jacob Eichhorn (Eastman School of Music)**

The work is finished. The work is complete. Colloquially, we might not make a distinction between these two statements. In this paper, however, I disambiguate the



often-conflated qualities, finishedness and completeness, according to agential attribution: the historical-fictional author and the work-persona, respectively. This distinction will be complicated by the abrupt ending—a special formal and storytelling device that merges authorial finishedness and the work's incompleteness. Leaning on theories of closure in popular music, I compare marked and unmarked endings in the context of unmet and met expectations within three case studies: Katatonia's "Omerta," the series finale of *The Sopranos*, and Dolly Parton's "The Bridge. I will interrogate the complex nexus of meanings that emerge when a listener or viewer is faced with an abrupt ending and how these agential attributions can become quite slippery.

**"Does Music Mean Anything At All? Towards a Semiotics of Digital Sampling"**  
**Kyle Adams (Indiana University)**

As musicians and scholars, we tend to assume that some form of meaning is inherent in music itself, that much of what we do is aimed at uncovering and conveying the intrinsic affect of a musical work. This paper will explore the ways in which digital sampling problematizes these assumptions by reconfiguring and recontextualizing musical excerpts, to the point that they can take on opposite affective qualities from those they had in the original work. We will investigate the following questions: how long does a musical passage need to be to have a consistent expressive meaning? And how many musical layers can one remove and replace while still maintaining the music's expressive core?