

**Presenting at a Conference  
Committee on Professional Development  
Society for Music Theory 2007**

**How to Write a Proposal**

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**I. Before you start writing**

- A. Choose a topic
  - 1. Seminar papers
  - 2. Dissertation
  - 3. Conference papers and articles by other people
- B. Work collaboratively
  - 1. Advisor and professors at your school
  - 2. Colleagues
  - 3. Outsiders within your emerging network
- C. Use resources provided by SMT
  - 1. Mentoring programs through CPD and CSW
  - 2. CPD website
- D. Do a substantial amount of the actual work
- E. Study the *Call for Papers* and follow the instructions

**II. Writing the proposal: Six generic conventions**

**(with thanks to Frank Samarotto, Sigrun Heinzelmann, Daphne Leong,  
Andrew Pau, Michael Klein, Ed Gollin, and Michael Buchler)**

**1. State the problem (and say why it's important and interesting).**

None of the four movements that fulfill the function of the traditional Scherzo and Trio in Brahms's symphonies seem quite to fit that role. Indeed, each among the four seems to be in various ways both superficial and subtle to be unique unto itself. The third movement of the First Symphony resembles on its surface neither a scherzo nor a minuet; as a duple-meter lyric pastoral in an apparent ternary form, it might be more appropriately characterized as an intermezzo. (Samarotto)

Motivic analysis of music that does not strictly belong in either category [tonal or post-tonal], such as music of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, poses difficulties not sufficiently addressed by a single tradition. (Heinzelmann)

The attention paid by the music-theoretic community to Milton Babbitt's *oeuvre* has focused largely on structural attributes, and to a lesser degree on listening experience and critical reaction, neglecting in large part performing experience (particularly that of performers who are not also theorists). (Leong)

**2. Connect with the literature (what you draw on; how you differ).**

The "scordatura fantasy" in Lewin 1998 explored the question: given two specific set classes, what are the possible voice leadings between them? Our inquiry into Berg's op. 5, no. 1 suggests a variation of the same question: given a specific trichordal set class and a specific voice leading, what are the possible set-class destinations? (Pau)

Initial entrée into this aspect of the piece might be provided by an intriguing but enigmatic analysis of the opening in Schenker's <i>Free Composition</i> . (Samarotto)
Building on the Matthew Santa's concept of <i>Modular Transformation</i> , I define eight types of motivic transformations, illustrate them with examples from Bach to Bartók, and introduce a new graphic representation of motivic transformation able to show changes of pitch as well as rhythm. (Heinzelmann)
In his recent article on narrative archetypes, Bryon Almén borrows James Liszka's semiotic theory of myth and applies it to the study of musical narrative (Almén 2003; Liszka 1989). Although Almén's article holds much promise, it focuses primarily on Liszka's method of structuring myth while largely ignoring a greater concern to show how myths are involved with cultural values. The proposed paper, therefore, seeks to expand Almén's theory to demonstrate how musical narratives confront both musical and cultural values. (Klein)

**3. Identify your solution to the problem. Thesis statement ("I will show...").  
What's new here?**

In this paper, I submit that in certain atonal pieces, a coherent musical structure is created through the use of consistency in voice leading, rather than through consistency in harmony. In exploring my thesis, I will focus on a specific class of voice leading, the chromatic wedge. (Pau)
In the following analysis, I will argue that Brahms has infused a traditionally segmented form with a fluidity and developmental impetus more associated with sonata movements. Brahms has so greatly remade the symphonic scherzo that the entire movement seems almost to fall within a single breath. An even greater achievement is that this remaking seems to occur not from without, by smoothing over formal divisions, for instance, but from within, through the most fluent realization of the metaphor of organic growth. (Samarotto)
The paper considers an unusual serial design and its relation to Bartók's manuscript revisions in "Divided Arpeggios" from <i>Mikrokosmos</i> vol. 6. In particular, we explore how Bartók's transposition of a seven-measure passage in his working copy of the final draft—turning what was, in the earlier drafts, a harmonically closed B section into a harmonically open section—interacts with the work's cyclical/serial design, engendering transformational isomorphisms with certain local and large-scale contrapuntal and harmonic structures in the work. (Gollin)
"My Time of Day" is Sky Masterson's confession: it is where he sheds his cool exterior and comes to terms with the fact that he has fallen in love with a missionary, a woman he only courted in order to win a bet. Each tonal region corresponds to a different phase in Sky's dramatic personal transformation. The various modulations and tonicizations all accompany motivic or thematic changes, thereby projecting a series of relatively disjointed narrative events. Because this song is short, episodic, and fairly terse, in my talk I will spin out a fairly detailed analytical narrative, discussing tonal regions, counterpoint, and their textual correspondences. (Buchler)
My paper demonstrates how the concept of step class enables a "parallel universe" of step-class operations suited to describe motivic transformations in modal, tonal, and post-tonal music. The enormous flexibility of the step-class approach stems from the fact that step classes can be mapped onto a variety of referential collections (e.g., the diatonic or octatonic). (Heinzelmann)
Our co-authored paper examines Babbitt's <i>None but the Lonely Flute</i> for unaccompanied flute (1991) from the points of view of flutist and theorist. We focus on the virtuosity—compositional and performative, apparent and hidden—that permeates the work. (Leong)

#### 4. Describe your methodology.

Example 1 illustrates the  $I_C^c$  relation between the two statements. However, whereas inversion-about-C underscores a formal relationship in the large, it says little about the content and function of the inverted passages it relates. More fundamental to the work's structure, I argue, is its organization around what I have called maximally-distributed multi-aggregate (MDMA) cycles. (Gollin)

The sketch appended to this proposal reflects one facet of my analytical methodology, and I will briefly explain some of the non-standard notation and their narrative implications. (Buchler)

I will introduce eight types of step-class operations grouped into four categories (see example 1b). The first category includes motivic transformations within a single modular space... The second category discusses motivic transformation across different modular spaces (referential collections of different cardinality)... The third category concerns inversions within and across modular spaces.... Finally, I briefly discuss internal motivic transformations; that is, transformations not brought about by a change in the referential pitch-class environment. (Heinzelmann)

#### 5. Demonstrate specific results.

We can see that there are clear similarities in the voice leading between trichords  $p$  and  $q$  in Example 4 and the voice leading between trichords  $x$  and  $z$  in Example 2. However, while the voices lead off from the same pitch-class set in both examples ( $x$  and  $p$ ), they lead to destination trichords ( $z$  and  $q$ ) that exhibit different pitch-class content and set-class membership. In other words, the trichordal pairs in these two examples from Berg's op. 5, no. 1 exhibit consistency in voice leading, but not in harmonic motion. (Pau)

A related fluidity pervades the form. The opening theme of the intermezzo recurs as an ever expanding antecedent but is not tonally closed until the end of the movement. Example 5, an overview of the whole movement's voice-leading structure, shows that the bass motion of the first five bars,  $Ab-F-C-Eb$ , is expanded throughout the A section. (Samarotto)

Example 4a illustrates how pcs of the (3,5,3,3)-cycle are distributed pair-wise, with either 10 or 14 steps between like pairs (with an ordered pair-wise pc grouping, an 11/13 distribution is not possible). The exposition unfolds the complete even form (unfolding clockwise on Ex. 3), while the reprise unfolds the complete odd form (unfolding counterclockwise on Ex. 3). The presentation of *both* forms of the (3,5,3,3)-cycle in the exposition and reprise both distinguishes and binds the two sections. (Gollin)

However, the resurgence of  $\hat{3}$  at m. 19 signifies a transformation of the initial melodic tone, now re-cast in the new key (G major). It more clearly represents a continuation of that initial A than either the salient A in m. 12 or the Ab in m. 16. These measures (12, 16, and 19) each function as points of dramatic and musical transformation as Sky Masterson gradually becomes the person that the missionary Sarah Brown wants him to be. (Buchler)

Chopin's Second Ballade opens with the pastoral theme shown in Example 1, representing a desirable order that closes positively in the putative home key, F major. The second theme, also shown in Example 1, crashes upon the idyllic scene, beginning in A minor and announcing a storm or battle topic. Our sympathies lie with the opening theme, suggesting that a desirable close to this narrative will find the storm subsided and the pastoral theme reasserted in the home key. But, as Example 2 shows, when the pastoral theme reappears, it has difficulty maintaining that musical topic, this time concluding with a passage that prolongs an anxious and striving diminished-7<sup>th</sup>, leading to a blaring announcement in G minor before a move to the dominant of D minor. (Klein)

The notated meter plays an ambiguous role, fluctuating dramatically in its distance from both time-point structure and musical surface. Although this distance prompts some critics to question the perceptual relevance of precise time points, duration, and even tempi, it is not an isomorphism of surface, meter, and time-point array that demonstrates both Babbitt's and the performer's virtuosity, but rather interplay among all three levels—now distant, now coinciding. Babbitt's skillful manipulation of these distances can be seen in mm. 98-108, the "climax" of *Lonely Flute*. (See Example 4 and corresponding array aggregates in Example 5.) (Leong)

## 6. Conclusion ("I will show...")

In each instance, the composer appears to have been focused primarily on voice-leading gestures. As a result, the harmonic activity in the music is determined in large part by the voice leading, not the other way round. (Pau)

This paper will show that this movement is composed as a series of ever-expanding phrases that grow organically out of the opening five bars, subsume parenthetical diversions (including a whole trio) in their wake, and completely overwhelm any sense of the traditional formal divisions. (Samarotto)

The talk will explore the analytical consequences of other MS revisions, including Bartók's altered transition to the reprise and his alterations to the lead-ins of each section—changes that have implications for the work's motivic coherence and large-scale tonal design. Bartók's revisions offer a rare and fascinating view into his compositional processes, a chance to compare the paths not taken with those he chose. (Gollin)

Culturally, the ballade as ironic narrative replays a theme common to Chopin's music, which often questions an idealized pastoral. If, however, we hear the pastoral theme as a singular voice, then the reversal of fortune in the ballade is tragic—the defeat belongs not with tonality or pastoral as ideal types but with this particular use of tonality and this particular token of pastoral. (Klein)

In Babbitt's *Lonely Flute*, then, the virtuosity of both composer and performer plays hide and seek. At times flamboyantly displayed, at others deeply hidden, virtuosity is at all times a *sine qua non* of the work. (Leong)

## III. Some concluding thoughts

- A. Matters of presentation
  - 1. Avoid footnotes (but include short bibliography)
  - 2. Use nice graphics
  - 3. Avoid errors of spelling, grammar, or fact
- B. Matters of style and tone
  - 1. Think about your audience
  - 2. Establish authority in your area, but be generous to the non-specialists
- C. Work collaboratively