

Three Analytical Essays on Music from the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

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CHAPTER 1:

Facing *The Hours*: Musical Meaning in Philip Glass's Score

When *The Hours* made its debut in 2002, critics were widely enthusiastic about the film, yet largely critical of the score.¹ A *New York Magazine* critic referred to Philip Glass's score, original to the movie, as "a study in egregiousness," while another critic for the *New York Times* wrote that the film was "noisily telegraphed by Mr. Glass's serial intrusiveness."² Other reviews echoed this opinion, primarily critical that the score was overbearing, departing from the virtual "inaudibility" that we expect from mainstream film scores.³ Yet those working closely with *The Hours* felt strongly that Glass's score was in fact the only music that worked to score the film. The director, Stephen Daldry, explains why Glass's score was ultimately chosen: "We were putting a whole variety of different test scores onto the film, just to see what the film itself would speak to, and would yield to, and the film was rejecting everything. Everything that was traditional film score seemed to reduce or simplify or sentimentalize what were layered, subtextual emotions."⁴ Screenwriter David Hare explains that Glass was different because they found that they needed "someone who, rather than writing what's traditionally called 'program music,' is a composer in his own right."⁵

¹ Rebecca Marie Doran Eaton, "Unheard Minimalisms: The Functions of the Minimalist Technique in Film Scores" (PhD Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 32-33.

² David Edelstein, "Behind Enemy Lines: Clint Eastwood's Unshakable *Iwo Jima*; Judi Dench's Acidity Trip; and a Rocky You Kinda Root For," *New York Magazine* (25 December 2006); Manohla Dargis, "A Friendship Develops, and Obsession Follows," *New York Times*, (27 December 2006). As cited in Eaton, "Unheard Minimalisms," 32. The term "original" here means that Glass composed all of the music in the score. Not all of the score, however, was composed with the movie in mind; "Metamorphosis Two" from Glass's *Five Metamorphoses* is part of the movie's soundtrack.

³ See list of seven principles of the classic Hollywood film score in Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), 26. As cited in Eaton, "Unheard Minimalisms," 27-8.

⁴ "The Music of *The Hours*," extra DVD material with *The Hours* (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures and Miramax Films, 2003).

⁵ Ibid.

While the critics' primary complaint was that the score was too obtrusive, that could in fact be exactly what Glass had in mind when he agreed to compose the film's music.⁶ His self-proclaimed goal from the onset was to compose a score that wouldn't merely accompany the film, but rather enhance and strengthen it: "The music had to somehow convey the structure of the film. The story's very complicated, and the music could take on a very important role in the film, as I saw it."⁷

From the very first scene of the film, based on Michael Cunningham's 1998 novel of the same name, it is, in fact, the soundtrack that weaves the abruptly changing scenes together.⁸ Taking place over three settings with three protagonists—non-fictional Virginia Woolf in Richmond, England in 1923; fictional Laura Brown in Los Angeles in 1951; and fictional Clarissa Vaughan in New York City in 2001—the opening sequence introduces the viewer to three very different settings, characters, and situations, with only the music being immediately common to all of them. Throughout the film, the score functions to draw parallels among the three protagonists, illustrating what they all have in common: the desire to escape from their respective mundane and unpleasant realities. The music further provides insight into how the

⁶ While an exact definition of the term is not universally agreed upon, I will sometimes refer to the score for *The Hours* as "minimalist." My grounds for accepting this label are the music's consonant sonorities working within a centric framework without the prevalence of standard hierarchical tonal progression, steady metrical pulses, and repeated musical fragments and phrases across the film. See Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 139, cited in Bruno Lessard, "Philip Glass: Cultural Recycling, Performance, and Immediacy in Philip Glass's Film Music for Gofrey Reggio's *Qatsi* Trilogy," in *Sound and Music in Film and Visual Media: An Overview*, ed. Graeme Harper, Ruth Doughty, and Jochen Eisentraut (New York: Continuum, 2009), 503.

⁷ "The Music of *The Hours*"

⁸ Pwyll ap Siôn and Tristian Evans employ an analytic approach inspired by Nicholas Cook, *Analyzing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), to understand minimalist music's function in various media, concluding that the "neutrality, objectivity, malleability and coloristic aspects" of minimalist music allow it to function as a musical chameleon of sorts, able to represent several emotional landscapes with little change, if any. This is perhaps another reason Glass's score is able to effectively span the lives of the three very different women. See Siôn and Evans, "Parallel Symmetries? Exploring Relationships between Minimalist Music and Multimedia Forms," in *Sound and Music in Film and Visual Media: An Overview*, ed. Graeme Harper, Ruth Doughty, and Jochen Eisentraut (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 671-91.

characters are feeling throughout the film, but appropriately falls short of providing indications of exactly *what* the characters are thinking.

Through both the structure of the music itself and the thematic development across the film, the musical score of *The Hours* provides the viewer with insight into the characters' emotions and draws parallels between the plot lines that are otherwise not obvious. In this paper, my argument unfolds in four sections. First, I will discuss a representative scene from each of the three settings in the film to demonstrate that the presence of music is a representation of the women's desires to retreat from the harsh realities of each of their worlds, while contrasting musical silence pervades moments when the women are facing those realities. Second, I will provide transcriptions and corresponding analyses of various excerpts of the score that function as musical themes appearing in multiple scenes in the film. Third, I will discuss how each of those themes connects different moments in the film that hold the musical material in common. Finally, I will briefly discuss musical signifiers present in the score and interpretations that viewers can draw from various external references in the music.

I. Music vs. Silence: Music as Escape

The Hours begins without music. We are told the setting is Sussex, England in 1941. Virginia Woolf, portrayed by Nicole Kidman, walks to the river. The camera then cuts to Woolf, presumably a few minutes earlier, penning her suicide note. We hear her narrating the note as we watch her approach the river. When she writes, "so I am doing what seems the best thing to do," a string orchestra enters and the camera cuts back and forth between her writing the note, her drowning herself, and her husband finding the note and running outside in an attempt to stop her. After Woolf drowns, the title of the film appears on the screen and the music changes character,

Englander, *Three Analytical Essays*

as we realize Virginia Woolf's suicide was an introduction to the film proper. The music transitions from a string orchestra to a solo piano, and we are formally introduced to the three women in their respective time periods. In each of the scenes, the women's partners are awake for the day, as the women lie in bed, awake. The string orchestra is eventually added to accompany the piano, and we hear the three women's various alarm clocks sounding, though obviously not waking the women, but rather forcing them to admit that the time has come to face the day. Each woman gets out of bed and goes through her morning routine, each lacking any meaningful facial expressions.

As the music competes to be heard with real sound in the opening sequence, it becomes immediately clear that the score and in-film sound will be competing forces throughout the film. The sudden sound of the alarm clocks, an unsubtle cry from the unavoidable passage of time, creates an uncomfortable and jarring effect against the score, which is comparatively consonant and predictable in its repetitive nature. This duality between the sounds of the women's realities and the non-diegetic music behind them permeates the film and functions to draw parallels between the three plot lines.

Clarissa Vaughan, New York City, 2001

In Clarissa Vaughan's plot line, Clarissa, portrayed by Meryl Streep, is paralleled with the fictional hostess Clarissa Dalloway, the protagonist from Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (the working title of which was, incidentally, *The Hours*).⁹ The film outlines a day in her life when she is throwing a party for her close friend, Richard, celebrating his winning of a poetry award. In the first scene between the two characters, we learn that Richard is ill with

⁹ Deborah Crisp and Roger Hillman, "Chiming the Hours: A Philip Glass Soundtrack," *Music and the Moving Image* 3, no. 2 (2010), 30.

AIDS and feels as though he would rather die than continue to live this way, while Clarissa puts much of her energy into keeping Richard in good spirits.

The scene begins at 18:30 as Clarissa arrives at Richard's apartment.¹⁰ Solo piano music accompanies Clarissa's trip to the apartment, but ends as soon as she arrives, paralleling the interruption of a thoughtful walk by the reality of Richard's depressing situation. In musical silence, Clarissa and Richard discuss the harsh realities of Richard's condition and his desire not to attend that evening's party.

At 21:21, Richard says, "I seem to have fallen out of time," and a string orchestra enters. Clarissa assures him it is only a party, he has nothing to worry about. The entrance of music corresponds with Clarissa's unrealistic escape from the sad reality that her friend is very sick, and her assurance to Richard that this party will be a simple, frivolous event. The viewer can tell Clarissa is lying to both herself and Richard, and that Richard is in no condition to be attending that evening's festivities. Richard mocks her for trying to convince him the party will be enjoyable: "Oh, Mrs. Dalloway. Always throwing parties to cover up the silence." The music continues as Clarissa's ideal and painless image of Richard's party continues: "You won't have to do anything. All you have to do is be there, and sit on the sofa." Richard then begins a monologue, and the music continues as he recalls his own non-reality: he wanted to be more than he turned out to be, wanted to write more than he ended up writing. The music functions in this scene as a cue that the characters are mentally living or reliving a non-reality, either with lies about the present, or regrets and memories of the past.

At 24:55, the music stops, and Richard brings the characters back to the present and to the truth: "We want everything, don't we?" As the music remains uncomfortably absent, Clarissa

¹⁰ See Susan McClary, "Minima Romantica," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Richard Leppert, and Lawrence Kramer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007): 48-65, for a musical analysis of the first half of this scene, discussing the nuanced harmonic changes that occur throughout.

Englander, *Three Analytical Essays*

is forced to face a reality Richard presents to her: that he no longer wants to live, and that he is only staying alive for her. Richard alerts Clarissa to the reality that the party is not in fact for him, but for her. Richard continues to attack Clarissa with harsh realities, reminding her that she has been coming to his apartment for years to keep him company, but that when he dies she is going to be forced to face her own needs and happiness. Clarissa, visibly upset from the conversation, packs up to leave the apartment.

At 26:50, when he sees he has truly hurt Clarissa by forcing her to face harsh truths, Richard calls after Clarissa to come back, and, presumably out of pity, allows them to recede back into the non-reality of parties and pleasantries. The string orchestra returns, and he kisses her, recreating a blissful moment from years ago about which they had previously reminisced. He assures her that he will come to the party, and that he will see her later that afternoon. Clarissa exits the apartment, in good spirits because of Richard's promise to attend the party after all, and the music pervades, reminding the listener that her good spirits are grounded in her refusal to confront reality.

Laura Brown, Los Angeles, California, 1951

Laura Brown's plot line outlines a day in the life of a 1950s housewife, portrayed by Julianne Moore, who feels out of place in her female role in a male-dominated society. On the surface her life seems perfect: she has a husband who loves her and a son who admires her, and she is pregnant with the couple's second child. On the day the film outlines, it is her husband's birthday, and she and her son, Richie, are going to spend the day baking him a birthday cake.

In a scene beginning at 35:38, the viewer begins to understand why Laura feels uncomfortable as a housewife. In prolonged musical silence, she is decorating the cake she and

Richie spent the morning baking when her hand slips and she ruins the writing. As she becomes angry about the cake, her friend, Kitty, played by Toni Colette, arrives unexpectedly to visit. Kitty's visit begins awkwardly as Laura concentrates, going through prescribed steps, behaving and speaking as she understands she should as a 1950's housewife. Kitty notices the cake and teases Laura for not knowing how to bake one when it is "ridiculously easy." To console Laura after her cake failure, Kitty assures her that it doesn't matter, because her husband loves her so much that he won't even notice her flaws.

To the modern audience it is clear why Laura would be upset: Kitty is comforting her with the fact that she may not have many skills or talents, but that she should rest assured that she does not need any, as her husband loves her, and that is what is most important. After Laura confronts her discomfort for several minutes by trying to converse with Kitty, it is Kitty's turn to confront a reality: she needs to go the hospital for several days to have a growth inspected.

The musical silence continues as Kitty and Laura discuss that this may be why Kitty hasn't been able to have children. Kitty begins crying: "You're lucky, Laura. I don't think you can call yourself a woman until you're a mother." Laura gets up to comfort Kitty, and as Kitty cries and Laura consoles her, Laura allows reality to completely take over and inadvertently kisses Kitty. In such a passionate and pivotal scene, the audience would expect music to swell, enhancing the moment. Instead, the musical silence that accompanies Laura's unintended surrender to romantic feelings for another woman makes the viewers feel as awkward as they understand Laura to feel in her life.

Realizing she has confronted too much too quickly, at 41:56 Laura pulls away, and as the string orchestra finally returns, the women choose not only to ignore the kiss, but also avoid any further discussion of the uncomfortable realities discussed before it. As Kitty heads for the door

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to leave, Laura asks, “Kitty, you didn’t mind?” Kitty feigns confusion, “What? I didn’t mind what?” The music persists as Laura assures Kitty, continuing the pattern of ignoring the truth, “Kitty, everything’s going to be all right.” Kitty plays along, “of course it is.” Kitty leaves, and the music continues. Again, similar to the earlier scene with Clarissa, the music here represents retraction from harsh and disconcerting realities of life, and the internal world of the characters where they choose to ignore those realities. Silence prevails as the women try to handle or confront conflict, and music prevails as they choose to ignore it.

Virginia Woolf, Richmond, England, 1923

The pattern of music signifying a retreat from reality into an internal world free from harsh truths persists in Virginia Woolf’s story as well. This plot line outlines the day in the novelist’s life when she first begins writing *Mrs. Dalloway*. On that day, Virginia’s sister, Vanessa, brings her three children with her to spend the afternoon and have tea with Virginia.

In a scene beginning at 44:36, Virginia and Vanessa are sitting in the garden outside of Virginia’s house, talking in silence about Virginia’s mental condition. Interrupting this discussion, at 45:40, Vanessa’s children enter, excited about a dying bird they have found and naively believe they can nurse back to health, and the string orchestra enters. The oldest child explains that he believes they may be able to save it, and the music, once more, indicates non-reality: in this case, a child believing he can save an animal when he clearly cannot. When Vanessa explains that it doesn’t seem likely to be possible, the two older children turn their attention to making a bed for the bird to die on, leaving the youngest child, also the only daughter, Angelica, as the only one of the children still concerned with the actual bird.

At 46:30, while the young boys and Vanessa search for leaves and grass, Virginia and Angelica stay behind as they realize the bird is already dying. Angelica takes a large leaf and rests the bird on it, and the piano enters, joining the string orchestra. As Virginia and Angelica place flowers around the bird, Angelica asks Virginia what happens when people die. The music continues as Virginia explains, “we return to the place that we came from.” As the characters confide in each other that neither of them remembers where they came from, Vanessa and the boys return. The funeral is over, and the children and Vanessa leave to go inside for tea, leaving Virginia alone with the dying bird.

At 48:15, the musical dynamic increases drastically, and the piano begins a new solo melody of lyrical passages and trills. Virginia ignores Vanessa calling after her, completely preoccupied with the bird. She lies down next to the bird, fixated on it, and in this moment it is clear that Virginia is relating to the dead bird, even longing to be the dead bird. To the viewer it is now completely unambiguous that the music represents an internal world free from undesirable daily existence. The strings and piano permeate the scene, drowning out Vanessa’s calls, and there is little movement on the screen as Virginia looks longingly at the bird.

Though these scenes follow three drastically different women in three contrasting settings, the music is what cues the viewer into what the women have in common: that they are unhappy and uncomfortable with the actualities of their various lives, and that they need to ignore the truth in order to survive. Musical silence becomes uncomfortable for the viewer because it is the indicator that the characters are confronting unpleasant realities. In contrast, the viewer finds refuge in the music, as we come to learn that it indicates that the women are choosing to put off those confrontations for those moments.

II. Musical Themes

The score of *The Hours* draws on several musical themes throughout the film, referencing or developing them where there are parallels in the different plot lines. In order to understand the parallels that are drawn, we must first identify the various themes throughout the film and extract possible implications inherent in the musical material.

The very first musical scene establishes a theme immediately in the string orchestra as Virginia pens her suicide note.¹¹ Example 1.1 conveys the original presentation of this theme and outlines the harmonic qualities that define it.¹² This harmonic pattern will be referred to as the Death Progression, given its original context. The harmonies are largely static and non-functional for most of the progression, as the first six measures alternate between tonic and submediant harmonies purely by means of the occasional and subtle addition of the submediant's root to the tonic. The final two bars present a falling voice that drops from a sixth to a fifth above the bass, creating a first-inversion dominant-seventh sonority that would apply to G minor's mediant. This falling motion and resulting dominant sonority are what come to most define this progression. This V^{\flat}_6 harmony never actually resolves to the mediant, however, but is rather followed by G minor's dominant, which allows the progression to repeat in its resolution, creating a circular and infinite progression.

The musical construction of this theme has multiple possible interpretations. The circular progression indicates timelessness; the inability of the progression ever to resolve definitively represents a never-ending feeling of time the characters experience. The hovering, non-functional nature of the alternating i and VI^{\flat}_6 chords similarly conveys a static state, as a voice

¹¹ The organization of this paper focuses on how various scenes throughout the film are connected to one another, and thus I frequently discuss scenes out of chronological order. A timeline has been included as Appendix I to aid the reader, in conjunction with the time indicators in the prose, to know where each scene being discussed falls within the course of the film.

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, all musical examples are personal transcriptions.

creates new sonorities but no directional function results. And the one time that functional sonority is clear when the tenor voice drops to create a dominant-seventh, the chord resolves by elision, taking the directionless implications into the realm of *misdirection*. Interpreting all of the elements of the theme, the Death Progression sonically illustrates an ironic state of timelessness, disorientation, and calmness.

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a High Strings staff (treble clef) and a Low Strings staff (bass clef). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 12/8. The first system shows a continuous eighth-note melody in the High Strings and a static bass line in the Low Strings. The second system continues this pattern. The third system features a more active bass line with some melodic movement. Roman numeral annotations are placed below the Low Strings staff: 'i' under the first measure, 'VI⁶' under the second measure, 'i' under the third measure, 'VI⁶' under the fourth measure, 'V₆⁶ / III' under the fifth measure, and 'V₃⁴' under the sixth measure.

Example 1.1: Death Progression, 1:59

Following the scene with Virginia’s death, during the viewer’s introduction to Laura Brown’s life, a new theme emerges, scored for a solo piano, shown in Example 1.2. In this scene, Laura’s husband, Dan, arrives at their home together carrying flowers while Laura is still in bed, and it is evident that Dan has gotten up early to get her flowers before she wakes up. Given its

similarly to the Death Progression, more harmonic than melodic in nature, and is, similarly to both previously discussed themes, circular in nature. As Example 1.3 shows, the theme consists of a syncopated rhythm in the piano and sustained whole notes in the low strings that function together to articulate a harmonic progression. The progression begins with root-descending triads for four measures and preparation for a strong half-cadence for the following four measures, ending with a dominant triad prepared by its own dominant to force the cycle to resolve to its tonic, propelling repeated iterations.

Because this material follows the Sleeping Theme, and the action associated with each of these two themes is directly contrasting, it is curious and important to note that the Waking Theme actually begins much like the Sleeping Theme in its marked initial descent, though this time harmonically rather than melodically. While the piano indicates the rising supported by the plot, the descending harmonies beneath it question the melodic ascent. Therefore the Waking Theme is an ironic theme, that serves to both rise and fall simultaneously, illustrating conflict and hesitation.

The musical score for Example 1.3, 'Waking Theme, 8:05', is presented in two systems. The first system is divided into two parts: 'Piano' and 'Low Strings'. The Piano part features a syncopated rhythm of eighth notes, while the Low Strings part consists of sustained whole notes. The second system continues the Piano part with triplets and the Low Strings part with sustained whole notes. Chord symbols are provided below the Low Strings staff: i, VII⁶, VI, V, 4/2, i⁶, VII⁴, VI⁴, V/V, V.

Example 1.3: Waking Theme, 8:05

After the Waking Theme, the film itself wakes in a way, as the music stops and we see the first scene with dialogue. Laura and her husband are having breakfast with their son, and the scene takes place in complete musical silence. When Laura's husband leaves for work, leaving Laura and Richie alone together in the kitchen, music returns with a string orchestra of cello and high strings once again, this time alternating between two harmonies, anchored on a common bass note: an A-minor harmony in root position and an F-major harmony in first inversion. The common bass note creates a now-familiar hovering effect, as the high strings move minimally above the low strings' sustained A, articulating either an oscillating third between C and E for the A-minor harmony, or an oscillating fourth between C and F for the F-major harmony. This material is shown in Example 1.4a.

At 13:46, we learn that these two hovering harmonies are introductory material to a new theme. The texture of the high strings intensifies with double-stopped thirds on the beats of each measure that more clearly articulate harmonies. Bells are added to the texture as well, articulating a pattern of falling fourths and rising seconds, and because of this instrumentation, the theme will be referred to as the "Bell Theme," shown in Example 1.4b. This is an apt title, as this material accompanies a scene that seems to reference the nature of the passing of time, a concept to which bells easily allude. In the scene, Laura and Richie are looking at each other for an extended amount of time without knowing what to say to one another after Laura's husband leaves for work, until Laura breaks the silence with what seems to be the only thing she can think of to say: "I'm going to make a cake." The extended lack of communication followed only by the most trite possible interruption illustrates an awkward moment during which time seems to pass

slowly for both the characters on the screen and the viewer, who becomes increasingly uncomfortable as the lack of dialogue continues.

The harmonic progression of this theme is simple: $i\hat{4}$, VI, V^7 in the key of A-minor, with a harmonic rhythm of two measures per harmony. Because the first tonic chord is in an unstable second inversion, which often functions as part of a dominant, and the bells and cello move in parallel motion from E to F between the second and third measures of the theme, the progression from $i\hat{4}$ to VI sounds more like deceptive motion than a departure from the tonic.¹³ After the first six measures, we expect a resolution to the tonic, but instead all of the instruments cut out except for the cello, which repeats the motion from five measures previously, progressing from E to F, hinting again at deceptive motion. When the theme returns repeatedly throughout the film, however, this cello resolution to $\hat{6}$ no longer occurs and the falling fourths and rising seconds continue indefinitely, falling continuously in range, and the Bell Theme, like the themes before it, is also circular.

While it represents timelessness in a familiar way, this theme carries contradictory implications. Its ability to repeat infinitely, register permitting, makes it perhaps the most “out-of-time” theme we’ve heard yet. But the bells remind us explicitly of the passage of time. One might say, therefore, that while music in *The Hours* represents an escape from reality, even in the characters’ mental withdrawal, the presence of reality continually looms.

¹³ While these hovering types of harmonies were nothing new for Philip Glass when this score was composed, nevertheless they are interesting to note here within the context of the film score, where these compositional techniques are less common, and the music of Philip Glass is not very familiar to the average theatergoer in this context.

Example 1.4a: Bell Theme Introduction

Example 1.4b: First occurrence of the “Bell Theme,” 13:46

After a scene in a flower shop, during which Clarissa buys the decorations for Richard’s party, the film again takes the viewer quickly through each of the women’s narratives, and we hear Virginia composing a part of Mrs. Dalloway: “...a woman’s whole life in a single day. Just one day, and in that day, her whole life.” The viewer can gain from this scene an understanding

that the film will be taking us through a crucial day in the life of each of these women, and during this transitional part of the film, during which we see Clarissa walking with some flowers to Richard's house, Virginia writing her novel, and Laura reading a cake recipe, the accompanying music is Glass's previously composed "Metamorphosis Two," the beginning of which is conveyed in Example 1.5.¹⁴

This material represents a marked change from the previous thematic material. Rather than being a circular progression or timeless theme, "Metamorphosis Two" is an extended piano work that exhibits a ternary (ABA) structure, and in this excerpt of the film, we hear an entire iteration of the A section, including all composed repeats. The harmonic structure of this material, however, is very similar to the Bell Theme. Consisting entirely of tonic, mediant, submediant and subtonic chords in the key of A minor, "Metamorphosis Two" also strongly hints at deceptive motion in its delivery. The progression of harmonies can be heard in two ways. One interpretation is in A minor: a tonic triad in second inversion, a mediant triad in first inversion, a submediant triad in root position, and a dominant seventh chord in third inversion applied to the mediant, the resolution of which is denied by the following presence of a tonic triad in second inversion. A second interpretation places the III^6 , VI, V^2/III and ultimate i^6 in the key of the mediant: I^6 -IV- V^4 - vi^6 in C major, cadencing deceptively. The combination of ambiguous key area and deceptive motion (which is suggested regardless of tonal interpretation due to the dominant seventh chord's resolution to the minor triad built on a root a whole step higher) works to give this whole transitional scene a tone of uncertainty and deception.

The first thirty minutes of the film present these themes, progressions, or pieces, and the remainder of the film references and develops them to give further insight to the nature of what

¹⁴ Score excerpt of "Metamorphosis Two" from "Philip Glass: The Piano Collection," London, New York: Wise Publications (2006). Date of Philip Glass's original composition is 1988.

the characters are experiencing in the plot. By following each of these themes throughout the course of the film, with their analyses in mind, we can connect the scenes that hold given themes in common, and allow the analyses to inform our interpretations of those connections.

Flowing (♩ = 96-104)

(R.H.)

mp

Am: i_4^6
CM: vi_4^6

8va.....

5

cantabile

i_4^6 III^6 VI V_4^7/III
 vi_4^6 I^6 IV V_4^7

8va.....

9

(R.H.)

i_4^6
 vi_4^6

Example 1.5: “Metamorphosis Two,” 16:40

III. Scenes and Themes

By the end of the *The Hours*, we learn that there are many ways that the three plot lines are intertwined. They are, for instance, connected through *Mrs. Dalloway*: Virginia writes the novel, Laura reads the novel, and Clarissa acts as the real-world counterpart to the novel's protagonist. Additionally, Laura and Clarissa eventually meet, as Laura's son Richie turns out, shockingly unpredictably, to grow up to be Clarissa's AIDS-infected friend Richard.

Despite these surface-level connections that come to interweave the plots, Philip Glass has stated that in fact it is the score that works "to make it viewable, to make it comprehensible, so the stories didn't seem separate, so that stories was [*sic*] tied together. The music, it seemed to me, *had* to be the thread that tied the stories together."¹⁵ For this reason, the same musical material supports all three women; there is no material specific to any one character. While it is clear that the very presence of music indicates that the women are retreating from their respective unfortunate realities, the actual content of the music gives further insight as to *how* they are retracting, and, as the director has indicated, into the characters' emotional complexities. Although it is interesting to note that the characters are paralleled in that they each are living lives that they secretly long to escape, the music connects them further by suggesting various parallels as well. These parallels are created by thematic material repeating throughout the film, and thus connecting the various scenes in which any given theme is present.

The first scene in which the Death Progression returns after its initial presentation is the scene in which Clarissa and Richard first discuss Richard's health issues. The entrance of the progression appears at 21:25, when Richard states, "I seem to have fallen out of time." While death isn't immediately a part of this scene on the surface it is the music that, as Glass indicates, contributes to this part of the narrative. An astute viewer may recognize this theme from

¹⁵ "The Music of *The Hours*."

Virginia's suicide and interpret it as a foreshadowing of Richard's similar suicide that is to come. Alternatively, it could symbolize a more broadly defined death. Accompanying Richard's monologue about his failures as an artist, this theme can represent the death of Richard's art, a demise that seems to have already taken place before the narrative of the film even began.

At 1:27:40, the Death Progression next returns. During this scene, the film cuts rapidly back and forth between Richard as an adult and Richie as a child. Adult Richard is looking at an old photo of his mother, sitting next to a small pile of light blue pills. He looks out of his window, and the film cuts to young Richie, screaming from the window of a babysitter's house as his mother drives away to a hotel with the intent to overdose. This is the first moment it becomes clear that Richard and Richie are the same character, and Richard is remembering the day his mother made up her mind to abandon him, his father, and his newborn sister. This scene where Richard reflects on dark memories of his past again does not use the Death Progression to signify literal death, but rather the death of the past. Richard is remembering the day that his childhood as he knew it would be destroyed. With this iteration of the Death Progression, it takes on a more complex meaning, both in this scene and retroactively in the scenes in which it previously appeared. By this point, the Death Progression represents not simply human death, but rather putting things to rest: Virginia Woolf, plagued by her depression and no longer able to enjoy living; Richard's art; and Richie's childhood.

The final iteration of this theme brings this interpretation to a peaceful closure. At 1:37:12, the husbands in both Virginia's and Laura's plot lines call their wives to bed, and in Clarissa's plot line, she finally meets Laura. In this scene, the Death Progression accompanies the putting of many things to rest. Laura and Virginia go to bed, and there is closure when Clarissa meets Laura and together they help one another through Richard's death.

The musical implications previously discussed provide further nuances for these scenes. The Death Progression, cyclical and deceptive, colors these scenes with the timelessness and elusiveness evidenced in the musical material itself. While the Death Progression develops over the course of the film to represent peaceful closure, the timeless nature of the theme indicates that matters are never fully concluded. This is bittersweet for the characters in the plot; while it indicates that Clarissa and Laura may never fully recover from the pain of Richard's loss, it also indicates that what has been put to rest will, in reality live on: Virginia's literature and Richard's poetry will be as timeless as the cyclical progression.

The next time we hear the Sleeping Theme, after our introduction to it (see Example 1.2), is at 45:50, as Angelica lays the dying bird on its deathbed. In this scene, as Angelica and Virginia talk philosophically about death, and Virginia identifies with the bird, the context of the Sleeping Theme blurs the lines between sleep and death. Bringing music into a scene with a funeral that has hitherto been associated with sleeping suggests that death can be thought of as an infinite sleep. This in effect robs death of its typical negativity and makes Virginia's longing to be like the bird more understandable and devoid of any morbidity.

At 48:50, the film transitions to Laura lying in her bed. Here the theme is used literally, but the visual transition taking place provides depth to its interpretation. When the film cuts immediately from the dead bird, with Virginia looking longingly at it, to Laura lying in the same position as Virginia and the bird, the line between sleep and death is blurred once more. By not changing the music with the visual transition on the screen, we are informed that there is no *real* change taking place at all. Virginia's physical position parallels Laura's so literally that we can understand that Laura is envying the infinite sleep of death in the same way Virginia was.

At 1:02:30, the theme completes its mutation. While it began as a literal representation of sleep, and further came to represent the blurred boundary between sleeping and death, in this scene the transition finishes a full transformation into representing death. Richie watches Laura drive off, and we know from an earlier scene where Laura takes several pill-bottles from the medicine cabinet that she plans to kill herself. This is the last we hear of the Sleeping Theme, and thus it marks the end of its trajectory. Unlike the Death Progression, which carries initial negative connotations and is transformed into something peaceful, the Sleeping Theme transitions from something innocuous into something darker and more permanent.

Again, the musical material itself contributes to what the theme offers for the overall implications of the film. Marked by melodic decline and repetition, it sonically illustrates an perpetual descent. As the theme comes to represent something more permanent than sleep by the end of the film, the music itself emphasizes that permanent unconsciousness through a sonic infinite descent that mimics the infinite sleep that is death.

The Waking Theme only returns once after its initial presentation in the film, but it is a unique moment in the film. At 1:03:10, the Waking Theme accompanies Laura's drive to the hotel where she plans to kill herself. It is appropriate that this is the only time in the film where this theme is repeated, as it is the one instance where life is chosen distinctly over death, hinting that Laura will change her mind when she gets to the hotel. The musical identity of the theme perfectly associates with its context in the film. In its initial presentation, its conflicting motion (a rising melody against a harmonic descent) illustrates all three women getting up for the day, albeit reluctantly. Here, it is much more uplifting. While initially the melodic ascent represented what the women were forced to do and the harmonic descent represented their desires to stay in bed, here Laura is breaking free of what she felt she must do. Her belief that she needed to kill

herself to be happy was overcome by her desire to live. The conflicting directionality of the lines functions perfectly to illustrate a struggle between consciousness and unconsciousness: awake and asleep; life and death.

The Bell Theme returns several times through the course of the film. Its first occurrence after its initial appearance is cut short. The proper theme never enters, and we only hear the hovering that is the theme's introduction. It is the music that enters as Richard kisses Clarissa before she leaves his apartment, allowing her to retreat from the harsh truths he had just forced upon her, at 26:50. Because the chiming never enters in this allusion to the Bell Theme, it can represent a failure to reach a goal, or an avoidance of some kind. It can represent Richard's failure to write as much as he wanted to write, or Clarissa's avoidance of facing the realities of Richard's impending death.

The next time we hear the Bell Theme, not only do we hear more than just the introduction, but we actually get the first *full* iteration of the theme in its entirety, as shown in Example 1.6. In this scene, at 27:30, Virginia pens the words that dictate both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*: "On this day, of all days, her fate becomes clear to her." Here the theme represents time and our inability to avoid it. As the bells chime in a cycle that never easily resolves, Virginia writes specifically about time, and the finite unit of one day. The theme and Virginia's words work together to illustrate that time is ever-present, and fate can present itself abruptly.

Play 3 times, each time the piano an octave lower than the previous time

The musical score consists of three systems, each for Piano, Upper Strings, and Cello. The first system features a piano part with four chords and a cello part with four notes. The second system features a piano part with a key signature change to one sharp and an 8vb marking, with a more complex upper strings part. The third system features a piano part with four chords and a cello part with four notes, marked 'molto rit.'

Example 1.6: Full Bell Theme, 27:28

After Laura kisses Kitty and Kitty convinces Laura to pretend that nothing happened, we hear the Bell Theme again. Following the kiss, Laura throws away the cake she did not perfect,

and she and Richie exchange glances, Laura visibly annoyed with Richie. In this context the incessant chiming of bells represents urgency and failure. The music serves as a reminder to Laura that while she wants to escape her life and pretend various things never happened, time is passing, and she still does not have the life she wants. In this moment, Laura decides she must take control of her own situation, even if it means ending her life.

The last time the Bell Theme enters is in a parallel scene to Laura and Kitty's kiss. At 1:09:36, as Vanessa is getting ready to leave with her children after her visit to Virginia, Virginia kisses her sister passionately. This scene connects Virginia to Laura, as both of them feel completely trapped and helpless in situations they feel they cannot escape, inadvertently acting in ways that reflect their desires but are unacceptable to society. Virginia's longing to escape her mental condition is clear when she asks her sister, "Do you think I may one day escape?" The musical material holding constant between these two transgressive and one-sided lesbian moments serves to draw further parallels between the two scenes, even more than the glaring visual similarities already did.

The Bell Theme's repetitive, infinite, and descending nature, serving in each of its scenes as a mental reminder to each character of time, also suggests to us that it is the infinite nature of time that is frightening each of the women. In each scene, the woman feels a sense of urgency and deadline: Virginia's character's fate must become clear in one day; Laura must take control of her life before it's too late; Virginia must escape from her problems before she can no longer handle them.

Finally, "Metamorphosis Two" returns twice more after its initial presentation. The first is at 16:40, as Clarissa talks to a florist about Richard's book, and how she inspired one of the characters. The piece continues as the film transitions to Virginia, writing *Mrs. Dalloway* and

coming up with the idea for the book. The film then cuts to Laura reading her cookbook as the excerpt finishes. The second return is at 1:32:00, for Richard's suicide. Most of the film passes between these two presentations of the piece. In the latter scene, "Metamorphosis Two" underscores the entire scene leading to Richard's suicide. He tells Clarissa that he's stayed alive for her, and now she must let him go. But as he prepares to fall out of his window—paralleling the suicide of the character Septimus in Virginia's *Mrs. Dalloway*—he asks Clarissa to tell him a story. Richard recalls memories from their past together, and his final words quote Virginia's suicide note to her husband: "I don't think two people could have been happier than we've been."

A clear link between the scenes that correspond to "Metamorphosis Two" is the theme of reading and story-telling. This could be an indicator of a retreat on the characters' parts from that which is real, forcing themselves into lands of fiction, but it can also provide commentary that fiction reflects our lives. The music underscores several scenes where fiction and reality are blurred: Clarissa is a character in Richard's fictional novel, Clarissa and Richard recall real past events when Richard asks her to tell him a story, and Virginia's fictional story is paralleled in many obvious ways by Clarissa and Richard.

As this is the one theme that is not circular, and has an ambiguous tonal center, it reflects the reality-fiction obscurity well. Just as the characters cannot separate their lives from fiction, this theme cannot separate A minor from C major. And as the one theme that is not inherently circular, it reflects the nature of stories: they all must come to an end. Unlike time and reality, fictional stories are self-contained and conclusive, just as "Metamorphosis Two" is.

As Philip Glass as himself pointed out, the music in *The Hours* provides narrative and interpretive detail that is otherwise lost. By following the various themes throughout the film, we

understand a transformation of their associations and meanings. Each theme matures as the film progresses, and understanding the musical implications of each theme as well as the various scenes to which they belong allows us to gather nuanced interpretations of elements of the plot as well as understand parallels among the characters that, without the music, either would not emerge clearly or would not exist at all.

IV. Music as Signifier: Interpreting External Musical References

In addition to the analytic interpretation the music allows the viewers of *The Hours*, Glass's score calls for some interpretation of externally referential musical material as well. As notated in Example 1.4, the initial presentation of the Bell Theme states the melody with actual bells. This makes for an obvious interpretation that this theme draws on the concept of time, as church bells chime reliably on the hour. As the film unfolds, we come to understand this theme in a timeless sense. Adding a symbolic interpretation to our analytical interpretation, we can understand that although the Bell Theme represents timelessness and the desire not to face *The Hours*, the chiming of bells underpins the theme, indicating that *The Hours* can never actually disappear. We can take from this an understanding that although the women choose to attempt to retreat from their existence, there is still an overbearing presence of *The Hours* within that retreat, audibly represented as the continuous and perpetual chiming of bells within the characters' world of refuge from harsh reality.

Finally, Susan McClary notes in her article "Minima Romantica" that in the final scenes of the movie, Glass's score becomes notably more Romantic than the minimal music from the hour and a half preceding it. McClary interprets this as a moment of awakening for Clarissa,

where “the power of domestic love triumphs.”¹⁶ In the scene, she has just spent the day preparing a party for Richard, only for him to kill himself, and then has to come home to be a hospitable host to his mother, Laura Brown, who abandoned Richard just after his sister was born (the sister with whom Laura is pregnant during her sequence) and flew to New York after hearing of his death. Clarissa retreats to her room with her lover, Sally, and the two kiss as the music that is comparably romantic to the music of the rest of the film pervades.

McClary’s interpretation is that in this scene, love prevails and Clarissa is celebrating that she chooses to live, albeit unhappily. Another interpretation is that this music makes reference to a previous scene involving Clarissa and romantic music, the only diegetic music in the entire film. In the earlier scene, starting at 50:10, Clarissa is preparing the food for Richard’s party. She is blaring Strauss’s *Four Last Songs* as she prepares, and is startled when Louis, Richard’s ex-lover, rings the bell to visit Clarissa. When Louis steps into the apartment, Clarissa turns off the loud Strauss, and the silence is overwhelming. As she and Louis talk, Clarissa suffers an emotional breakdown from the stress of the party and the triteness of her life in general.

While it is possible that the music in the later scene with Clarissa and Sally is, in fact, celebrating Clarissa’s decision to choose to live, it can also be a reference to Clarissa and Strauss, and can be an indicator that although Clarissa is retreating to the bedroom and sharing an intimate kiss with her lover, she is still only repressing her true internal turmoil, covering it once again with blaring romantic music, this time in her head.

McClary’s interpretation also fails to discuss that this romantic music from the scene with Clarissa and Sally carries over from the previous scene, where Clarissa’s daughter, Julia, talks to Laura Brown about why she chose to leave Richard when he was a child. The meaning of this can be understood through the lens of both interpretations outlined above from the scene in the

¹⁶ McClary, “Minima Romantica,” 62.

bedroom: Perhaps this music offers a glimmer of hope, as McClary's interpretation of the bedroom scene suggests, and it represents Julia's understanding and forgiveness offered to Laura Brown. Or perhaps it is the beginning of the Romantic reference to the Strauss, and thus marks the beginning of a feigned sense of hope and forgiveness in all of the characters, covered by the façade that romantic music provides, which then carries over into the bedroom scene that follows.

The score to *The Hours* is for the most part self-contained, which makes the moments in which it makes significant external reference notably poignant. The reference to the chiming of bells to indicate time and *The Hours* helps the viewer understand that the women's retreat from reality, represented musically, is underpinned with a constant burden that reality still exists, despite their attempts to deny it. The music's reference to the romantic sonority of Strauss in Clarissa's final scene helps the viewer to understand that while on the surface she appears to be adapting to the day's trauma, she is really suppressing inner turmoil, and merely covering it with a façade.

While the minimalist score seems on the surface to offer little in the form of interpretation for *The Hours*, in reality it is quite possibly uniquely suited to the film, doing it justice while avoiding belittling the complexities of its characters. By remaining constant throughout the film, spanning the three women's lives, the music connects the protagonists in ways that it could not have done if each character had her own prescribed motives. At the same time, the music's lack of specific identity with any of the characters prevents any interpretation of the music as representing a particular emotion in any one of the characters. Instead, the non-teleological and consistent soundtrack allows the viewer to glean nuanced understandings of

complex emotional conditions that the three protagonists hold in common with one another. A score in any other genre would deny the film the hovering time-space that is necessary to escape *The Hours*.

For this reason, Philip Glass's minimalist score, contrary to the film critics' reactions, is not distracting from the film, but rather appropriately pervasive to convey to the viewer an interpretation of the complexities at play in the film. It isn't merely a score that works with the story; it is *the* score that works with the story, as it denies the viewers a simplified and overly precise understanding of the characters' thoughts, while providing them with an understanding of the various complex emotions the characters hold in common.

CHAPTER 2:

The Grim(m) Truth: The Dark Lessons Behind the Fairy Tales in Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*

“We would write a story in which the lives of famous fairy-tale characters would collide and intertwine in a mutual meeting ground, and where else but the woods, where so many of the stories take place?...ah, the woods. The all-purpose symbol of the unconscious, the womb, the past, the dark place where we face our trials and emerge wiser or destroyed.”¹⁷ These words, penned by Stephen Sondheim himself in a recently released collection of annotated lyrics to many of his musicals, concisely and eloquently convey the true essence of his 1987 musical, *Into the Woods*.

Into the Woods premiered on Broadway in 1987, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, and book by James Lapine. The production, directed by James Lapine himself, ran for over two years, with over 750 performances on Broadway. The musical was nominated for many Tony awards, including Best Musical, and won several, including the awards for best musical score and best book. In the same collection of lyrics, Sondheim articulates the setting and construction of the musical:

In a folktale time and setting, a childless baker and his wife are told by a witch that they will be able to conceive if they can find and bring to her four objects: a cow as white as milk, a cape as red as blood, hair as yellow as corn, and a slipper as pure as gold. In the course of their quest, the Baker and his Wife encounter Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, and Jack (of “Jack and the Beanstalk”) and become part of their stories. At the end of the first act, they achieve their goal. The second act deals with the consequences of what they did to get there.¹⁸

It is those consequences that make *Into the Woods* a piece of art worthy of analysis and in-depth study. While on the surface, the musical seems to be a complex and witty intermingling

¹⁷ Stephen Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 58.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

of our favorite childhood stories, it is in reality much more, and much darker. In his article “The Sung and the Said: Literary Value in the Musical Dramas of Stephen Sondheim,” Thomas P. Adler states that the central theme of *Into the Woods* is that we must embrace the unknown and welcome change in order to grow.¹⁹ But I think the central theme is something much bleaker. In the original Broadway cast’s production of *Into the Woods*, the plot, music, lyrics, and casting function together to convey the message that there is cynicism and corruption behind people’s pleasant facades, and that if we are not aware of the inclination for corruption to overpower innocence, it can lead to the destruction of morality. In this paper, I will go into detail about each of these elements to show how Sondheim conveys this message.

I. Plot

There are several ways in which the overarching plot of *Into the Woods* functions to portray the dark underlying message of the musical. The way the plot functions to portray this message is most readily apparent in the distinctions between Act I and Act II, and in the methodical ultimate corruption of each of the initially “pure” characters.

Act I functions as a long representation of the pleasant, innocent façade. In fact, Musical Theater International created a version of the show, *Into the Woods, Jr.*, that would be suitable for young audiences, and this version omits the second act entirely. Act I follows all of the main characters on their respective quests: Cinderella wishes to go to the king’s festival, Jack wishes his cow would produce milk, the baker and his wife wish that they could bear a child, and Little Red Riding Hood wishes to bring food to her grandmother’s house. As needed in any good fairy tale, an evil witch is revealed to have cast a spell on the baker’s family after she caught his father

¹⁹Thomas P. Adler, “The Sung and the Said: Literary Value in the Musical Dramas of Stephen Sondheim,” Chapter 1 in *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Sandor Goodhart (New York: Garland, 2000), 54.

stealing from her, and that is why they cannot have children. It is also revealed that the witch took the father's first child—the baker's sister, Rapunzel—after the incident. The witch provides a list of things needed for a magic potion—which link to the other plot threads—that will make her beautiful again; if the baker and his wife can bring her the ingredients, the spell will be reversed.

Obviously, this initial scene sets up a complicated story line. Not only does each character have his or her own problem to deal with, but the stories must eventually come together, as they are all needed to make the witch's potion. The first act unfolds like a complex super-fairy-tale, the stories intertwining. Characters fall in love, connections between fairy tales are made (Cinderella's prince, for instance, turns out to be the brother of Rapunzel's prince), giants and wolves are slain, the baker meets his long-lost father, and finally, for the ultimate happy ending, the witch's spell is reversed, and her youthful beauty is restored. After a complicated first act, where all of our favorite childhood stories are connected and the characters live happily ever after, we are left wondering what could possibly be left for Act II.

Act II begins with an immediate grimness: the characters, who all recently attained everything they wanted in life, are still unsatisfied. Jack misses the mysterious home he encountered in the sky, where in the first act he met—and robbed—the giant and his wife; the baker and his wife have the child they always wanted, but want more room for the family; and Cinderella is married to her prince, but is bored with marriage. As Act II unfolds, the giant's wife descends to the ground, angry that the drama beneath her has resulted in her husband's death. The princes pine for other women, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, themselves bored within their marriages they so romantically fostered in Act I. None of the characters is satisfied, and the act climaxes in a scene during which all of the characters abandon one another, fighting about

who they will sacrifice to the giantess as an apology for the death of her husband. In a morbid ending, many of the characters are killed by the giantess. Those who remain vow to change, their lessons learned, in a finale during which all of the characters teach the audience the wisdom they have gained: actions have consequences, and we must be careful what we teach our children, being good role models for them. As the second, darker, “happily ever after” seems to be accomplished, however, Cinderella concludes the performance with, “I Wish...,” indicating that, if there were to be a continuation of the story, the cycle would repeat once more.

On the surface level, the two acts of the musical function to set up a clear dichotomy between naïve innocence, portrayed as Act I, and dark reality, represented by Act II. But within the course of the musical, each of the “pure” characters, who begin the story simply as naïve wishful thinkers, is methodically corrupted.

Little Red Riding Hood begins the story as a young girl who simply wants to bring some food from the bakery to her grandmother. The baker and his wife tease Red, implying that she is going to eat all of the food before she arrives at her grandmother’s home, emphasizing her presumed immaturity. On her way to visit her grandmother, parallel to the classic fairy tale, Red encounters a wolf. But unlike the classic fairy tale, he entices her, tempting her to succumb to her temptations to talk with him and “stray from the path,” in his song, “Hello, Little Girl.” While the story is that the wolf wants to eat Red, an obvious interpretation, which will be explored in-depth throughout this paper, is that the wolf represents sexual temptation. Red is unable to resist, and the wolf “eats” Red, representing Red’s first sexual encounter. After the encounter, Red sings of her newly gained knowledge in her song, “I Know Things Now,” acknowledging her loss of innocence, and the positive and negative consequences involved: “Isn’t it nice to know a lot? And a little bit not.” After the wolf eats Red, the baker slays the wolf, and Red and her

grandmother are revealed to still be alive. As a thank-you for slaying the wolf, Red gives the baker her cape—which he needs for the witch’s potion—but keeps and later wears the wolf’s hide. This signifies her abandonment of her innocence, represented by her cape, in favor of her new corruption, symbolized by the wolf’s hide.

The baker undergoes his own transition throughout *Into the Woods*. Initially portrayed as a victim of a curse caused by his father’s indiscretions, the baker transitions from a sympathetic character to a man who will do anything, at the expense of anyone, to get what he wants. His first moment of corruption occurs when he sees Jack in the woods trying to sell his cow, an ingredient he needs to reverse the witch’s spell. Seeing that Jack is vulnerable, he convinces Jack to sell his cow to him for only five beans by saying that the beans are magical. Jack goes home to face his livid mother, and we can see that Jack’s naïveté was exploited for the baker’s gain, and it is Jack who must now suffer. The baker’s greed rubs off on his wife, who similarly aims to acquire all of the necessary items at any expense, attempting to steal from both Cinderella and Rapunzel, without regard to what that theft could mean for them. In the end of Act I, the baker and his wife present all of the ingredients to the witch, and don’t give any thanks or credit to the people who they swindled or robbed along the way.

Jack experiences a corruption of innocence as well, and similarly to Red, it is also an ambiguously sexual one. Jack’s innocence is made most obvious when he allows the baker to have his cow for a handful of beans that Jack believes to be magical. However, the beans do turn out to be magical, and, paralleling the “Jack and the Beanstalk” fairy tale closely, grow into a giant beanstalk leading up to the sky.²⁰ Jack climbs the beanstalk, and his innocence has

²⁰ For a tangentially-related discussion of the associations between Jack’s beanstalk and masculinity, see Susan McClary, “Getting Down Off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman’s Voice in Janika Vandervelde’s *Genesis II*,” Chapter 5 in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 112-31.

vanished. At the top of the beanstalk, he finds a home where two giants—a man and his wife—reside. He steals from the giants in order to attempt to buy his cow back from the baker. While greed is a clear indicator that Jack's innocence has been corrupted, there are sexual undertones as well, as Jack sings about his ambiguously Oedipal experience of getting close to the nurturing giantess. By the end of *Into the Woods*, when the giantess approaches the community of characters because her husband has died, Jack has transitioned from a young and foolish boy into a man who must protect himself from the consequences of his previous actions.

Finally, Cinderella transitions away from innocence over the course of *Into the Woods*. Initially a very sympathetic character, Cinderella's story parallels the classic fairy tale exactly, as she is emotionally abused by her stepfamily, wishing she could go to the prince's festival, only to be mocked by her family for having those desires. In a clear act of innocence and naïveté, Cinderella visits the grave of her deceased mother, seeking guidance. Her mother's spirit gives her shoes and a dress to wear to the ball, and she attends. She is confronted with her sexuality for the first time while she is there, as the prince pursues her. Scared at first, Cinderella initially runs away. But when the prince finds her, she becomes engaged to marry him, and her days of being abused and tormented are behind her. Now a member of royalty, Cinderella is suddenly powerful. Her bird friends peck out the eyes of her stepfamily, and Cinderella grows ungrateful for the new life she has. While Cinderella seems to regain knowledge of what is moral and important in a scene where she tells Red that it is wrong to kill the giantess, it is Cinderella who gives the final indicator that the selfish cycle of *Into the Woods* continues after the story's completion, with her final words, "I Wish...".

In a very powerful and symbolic scene, these four last-standing characters, who survive through the end of the musical due to their willingness to sacrifice the wellbeing of others for

their own protection, band together to slay the giantess. This scene is the ultimate corruption of purity: Red, the baker, Jack, and Cinderella abandon their innocence throughout the play to unquestioningly kill the giantess, who herself was corrupted by wrath after the death of her husband.²¹ All of the characters, alive and dead, return for a finale that strikes the viewer as inappropriately uplifting, as so many of the characters have died, and those who survived were corrupted by lust, greed, power, envy, or wrath. The final moments of *Into the Woods* perfectly encapsulate the story as a whole, as various once-pure characters come together to slay the last nurturing figure left living, followed by a tongue-in-cheek finale that teaches the audience the lessons “learned” by the various characters, offering a tainted glimmer of hope for the four characters still living until Cinderella indicates that the selfish cycle will simply start all over again, beginning once more with the false innocence of Act I.

II. Musical Material

Into the Woods presents the audience with a complex score, in which Sondheim uses music to illustrate sonically several of the narrative’s main themes. First, he creates a dichotomy between the orchestra and the cast that signifies the conflict between “self” (the individual characters in the cast) and the “other,” represented by the orchestra. Additionally, the music provides nuance to the situations on stage that are otherwise not clear, helping explicate themes of the musical, particularly the concepts of self-interest and the corruption of innocence.

This section will examine examples of both of these points. I will analyze the opening sequence, and through a discussion of melody, harmony, and rhythm, I will demonstrate that there is a clear dichotomy between the characters on stage and the orchestra accompanying them.

²¹ For another interpretation of the meaning behind this scene, see S. F. Stoddart, “‘Happily...Ever...’ NEVER,” 218, where Stoddart purports that this is a scene about coming together for the greater good.

I will then discuss how the orchestra interacts with characters in “I Know Things Now” and “Any Moment” to work in opposition to the characters, possibly passing judgment on them. My discussion will then turn to the way the music colors various scenes to point to the musical’s overarching themes. That discussion will begin with Little Red Riding Hood’s duet with the Wolf, “Hello Little Girl,” in which each character has a defining musical style that lends itself to a clearer understanding of each character’s complexities. I will then examine the princes’ duet, “Agony,” and the interpretations afforded by that song’s waltz setting. The section concludes with an exploration of “Giants in the Sky,” where music functions to question the words Jack sings.

The opening moments of *Into the Woods*, shown in Example 2.1, initiate the conflict between the orchestra and the cast. The characters—Jack, Cinderella, the baker, and the baker’s wife—sing in imitation of one another, using a pentatonic collection. Similar melodic fragments, such as the major second ascent on the words “I wish,” immediately connect the various fairy tales, and the use of the pentatonic collection implies childishness in all of the characters as well.²² Most phrases in this opening section end on E (and the key signature—one sharp—supports an E-centric interpretation), so although there is no leading tone in the pentatonic collection to point to an unambiguous tonal center, this passage clearly revolves around E, giving it the static quality modal music possesses.

²² See the section entitled “Pentatonic Innocence and Children’s Games” in Stephen Banfield, *Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 401–405.

NARRATOR: Once upon a time--
Brightly ($\text{♩} = 132$)

CINDERELLA:
mf >

--in a far-off kingdom--

I wish...

Risoluto

f sfz mf (*sempre staccato*)

5 NARRATOR: --lived a young maiden--
To→7 -- a sad young lad--

More than an - y - thing... More than life...

8 --and a childless baker--

9

More than jew - els...

JACK:
mf >

I wish...

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) features the Narrator's vocal line and Cinderella's vocal line. The piano accompaniment is marked 'Risoluto' and includes dynamics *f*, *sfz*, and *mf*, with the instruction '(sempre staccato)'. Cinderella's vocal line includes the lyrics 'I wish...' and is marked with a triplet and an accent. The second system (measures 5-7) features the Narrator's vocal line with the lyrics 'More than an - y - thing...' and 'More than life...'. The piano accompaniment continues with triplets. The third system (measures 8-9) features Jack's vocal line with the lyrics 'More than jew - els...'. Jack's vocal line is marked with a triplet and an accent. The piano accompaniment includes dynamics *f* and *mf*.

NARRATOR: --with his wife.

10 11 12 13

C. I wish... More than the moon... The King is giv-ing a Fes-ti-val.

J. More than life... More than an-y-thing... More than the moon...

BAKER'S WIFE: *mf* I wish...

BAKER: *mf* I wish... More than the moon...

14 15 16

C. I wish to go to the Fes-ti-val- -and the Ball...

J. I wish... I wish my

B.W. More than life... More than rich-es...

B. More than life... More than rich-es...

The orchestra's material, in contrast, is entirely non-centric. Alternating between seventh chords of major, minor, and dominant quality, the material lacks any resolution that would imply tonal relationships. Just as the cast's centric presence of E signifies immobility, the lack of any tonal center in the orchestra signifies the anonymity of society, and the lack of a definitive tonic corresponds to the lack of definitive identities in society as a whole.

When Cinderella summons birds later in this piece, she shifts to an F-Dorian mode, which further emphasizes this interpretation of a sedentary cast (see Example 2.2a). The Dorian mode is totally symmetrical: both ascending and descending, the intervallic pattern is, in semitones, two, one, two, two, two, one, two (see Example 2.2b). This palindromic nature of the Dorian mode presents a situation where there is no distinction between forwards and backwards, taking the lack of directionality even further.

When Little Red Riding Hood enters with her march, we finally hear direction from a cast member. Her melody, in an E \flat -major mode in compound quadruple time, introduces the first instance of a leading tone with her beginning stepwise ascent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$. This works well with the lyrical content, as Red's trip to her grandmother's house corresponds with the first moment that a character physically goes anywhere. It also marks the moment at which the plot of *Into the Woods* is set in motion.

Beneath Red's melody, the orchestra tells a different tale. The bass line seems to support Red, alternating between $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$, but the other instruments function completely independently of the bass line and are again harmonically non-functional, articulating chords that function only coloristically, never with any resolution (see Example 2.3). For instance, while many of the orchestra's harmonies cannot even be identified with a functional label—the B \flat -E \flat -F-A \flat chord in measure 1, for instance—even the ones that can do not resolve properly. As an example, the

second-inversion chord with the root of F heard in the third and fourth beats of measure 3 does not resolve as a typical $ii\frac{3}{4}$ chord, but rather proceeds to a first-inversion G-major triad. In the key of $E\flat$ -major, this functions as a V^6/vi , but rather than proceeding to a C-minor harmony, this G-major triad proceeds to a first-inversion F-major triad, in $E\flat$ major the V^6/V . But a $B\flat$ dominant harmony is never achieved, returning again to the non-functional $B\flat-E\flat-F-A\flat$ chord we heard in measure 1.

The image shows two staves of music in $E\flat$ major. The first staff is in 6/4 time and contains the lyrics: "Fly, birds, Back to the sky,". The second staff is in 4/4 time and contains the lyrics: "Back to the eaves and the leaves And the fields And the -". The music consists of a single melodic line with various note values and rests.

Example 2.2a: Cinderella's summoning of the birds²⁴

The image shows a single staff of music in F-Dorian mode, consisting of a sequence of eight notes: F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F. Below the notes are the fingerings: 2, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 2.

Example 2.2b: Symmetry of the F-Dorian collection

Furthermore, an examination of Red's melody shows us that even the seemingly supportive bass line is disconnected from the melody. While the alternation between $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$ in the bass line suggests tonic-dominant relationships, the melody focuses on predominant harmonies. Nearly every measure in Example 2.2 contains alternating C's and $E\flat$'s, suggesting

²⁴ Extracted from Sondheim, *Into the Woods*, 23.

either a vi or IV harmony, and each phrase arpeggiates a ii harmony halfway through (the ends of measures 2 and 6). Additionally, every time the bass line suggests a half cadence with the arrival of B \flat , the melody either suggests a tonic arrival (as is the case at the end of m.4) or a predominant arrival (as in m.2).

There are multiple interpretations of the orchestra's refusal to play along with Red's directional melody. Perhaps the orchestra anticipates that Red's journey will not go as planned. Or perhaps the journey to her grandmother's house is not the journey Red really needs to take at this juncture. Either way, we are inclined to believe the orchestra, as their chromatic content, when juxtaposed with Red's childish melody and rhythms, exudes a sense of experience when contrasted with Red's naïveté. With an interpretation that the orchestra represents society, this scene can illustrate the way that the community judges or patronizes the young and innocent, and perhaps Red responds to this condescension from society as the story unfolds.

The dichotomy between the orchestra and the cast that is established during the extended opening scene continues throughout the musical. In "I Know Things Now," for instance, Red sings about her ambiguously sexual encounter with the wolf in a positive and enlightened way. Similarly to the opening sequence, however, the orchestra questions Red, suggesting a new condescension, this time judging not for her naïveté, but for her sexual awakening. Although this is evident in obvious ways where the orchestra darkly colors Red's stories—for instance, the orchestra throws chromatic and dissonant punches when Red recalls how the wolf "said 'come in'"—there are also more subtle ways the orchestra refuses to support Red. Several of her melodic cadences end on $\hat{4}$. Tonally, this implies a half-cadence, in which Red takes the seventh of a V⁷ harmony. But in practice, when she cadences on $\hat{4}$, the orchestra refuses to support her with a dominant harmony, instead articulating repeated staccato augmented triads built on $\flat\hat{2}$.

Alla marcia
LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD:
mp

In - to the woods, it's time to go, I hate to leave, I have to, though.

Leggiero, jauntily
(mp) (sempre staccato)

R.R. In - to the woods - it's time, and so I must be - gin my jour - ney. In - to the woods and through the trees To

R.R. where I am ex - pect - ed, ma'am. In - to the woods to Grand-moth - er's house -

mf *mp* *mf*

(Eats bun)

Example 2.3: Little Red Riding Hood's initial march²⁵

“Any Moment,” during the scene in which Cinderella’s prince seduces the baker’s wife, also features the orchestra subtly criticizing the characters for their choices. Here, however, the

²⁵ Sondheim, *Into the Woods*, 19.

conflict between orchestra and cast arises not harmonically, but metrically. For the majority of the song, the characters sing in simple triple meter. Given the romantic nature of the song and this meter, it would be predictable for the orchestra to accompany the singers in a similar simple triple meter, possibly with a waltz topic. Instead, the orchestra accompanies with a compound duple meter, articulating broken triads in steady eighth notes, alternating harmonies after each triad. When the baker's wife departs from the meter of her duet during a moment of clarity—"This is ridiculous, what am I doing here? I'm in the wrong story!"—she briefly adopts a compound meter, singing in a triplet hemiola. Based on parallel pitch structure and textual punctuation, this phrase is divided into three subphrases: 1) "This is ridiculous," 2) "What am I doing here?" 3) "I'm in the wrong story." The first two subphrases indicate a clear 6/8 feel, each subphrase six syllables long, with natural accents on the first and fourth syllables. The third subphrase continues this pattern, with natural accents on "I'm" and "wrong," and prolongs the subphrase by breaking out of eighth-note triplet pattern to maintain a natural metric accent on the first syllable of "story" (See Example 2.4). So in this brief moment, she adopts a compound duple meter as well, agreeing with the orchestra for the only moment in the song during this out-of-body epiphany.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 6/8 time, marked 'mf', and features triplet patterns. The piano accompaniment is in 6/8 time, featuring broken triads in steady eighth notes. The lyrics are: "This is ri-dic-u-lous, What am I do-ing here? I'm in the wrong sto-ry." The score is numbered 15, 16, 17, and 18.

Example 2.4: Baker's wife's compound duple epiphany²⁶

²⁶ Sondheim, *Into the Woods*, 216.

This constant conflict between the orchestra and the cast illustrates the self-centeredness of each of the cast members, sonically underscoring the separation of the individuals in the plot from their community. But Sondheim employs more musical devices than just this conflict to illuminate the messages of *Into the Woods*. In “Hello Little Girl,” we hear a duet between Red and the wolf that takes place before Red gives into the wolf’s temptations. Red’s melody is noticeably simple, consisting of only four notes in the entirety of the song, and her rhythms consist of sixteenth, eighth, or quarter notes, with no syncopations. The wolf’s melody, in contrast, is much more complex, chromatic and syncopated, representing something interesting, sexual, and beyond Red’s current understanding.²⁷ When the pair stops singing and the wolf “eats” Red, we hear the orchestra play the same material that accompanied Red’s simple melody, and the wolf’s howl abruptly interrupts it. If Red’s melody and the accompaniment behind it, played on a childlike glockenspiel, represent Red’s innocence, then this interruption from the wolf clearly represents the moment of its corruption, and we don’t hear that innocent material again.

In “Agony,” the music similarly provides nuance to the scene. Here the princes sing in a waltz style, supported by the orchestra, about rejection from women. The waltz topic works here in a few ways. First, it represents the people singing on a basic level; waltzes are associated with royal balls and the upper class, so it comes as no surprise that when the princes sing, this style and its implications of opulence support them. But it functions ironically as well. Waltzes are carefree dances associated with parties, not pain, so to hear this topic supporting a song about agony is unexpected. This irony contributes to a clearer understanding of the words the princes sing: the situation lacks any real or profound pain for them; they are merely frustrated because

²⁷ For a discussion of the sexual and gendered nature of chromaticism, see Susan McClary’s discussion of Bizet’s *Carmen* in “Paradigm Dissonances: Music Theory, Cultural Studies, Feminist Criticism,” *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 1 (1994), 71–5.

they are not used to rejection. But the superficiality of high-class frivolity gained from the waltz topic prevents the audience from sympathizing with their pain at all, no matter the context or the extent of it. The waltz suggests that they secretly enjoy the rejection, since it is only part of the game of courtship, not actually a broken heart. This element of courtship also fits with the waltz topic, as courtship is an element of a ball as well. Aside from the waltz topic, “Agony” also paints the prince’s song musically to give a deeper understanding of their real intent. When Rapunzel’s prince imitates Rapunzel’s beautiful singing, the orchestra articulates dissonant sevenths and seconds, thwarting any opportunity for it to sound as though he really is thinking of her fondly at all.

Finally, the musical material in Jack’s “Giants in the Sky” provides insight into his deeper feelings. The music here demonstrates that the lyrics Jack sings either aren’t what he feels or aren’t true. The instrumental texture of horns, strings, and glockenspiel suggests another world with its timbre, and the articulations throughout the song are slurred and unaccented, with little dynamic contrast. Given the lyrical content describing a “big, tall, terrible” giant, this musical accompaniment seems unfitting. The music indicates that in reality, this large woman sweeping the floor is not a terrible ogre at all, but is the character that contributes to Jack’s coming of age, nurturing him and giving him shelter while he is at the top of the beanstalk. Jack’s story about her being scary is a cover for his fear of the unknown and perhaps his loss of innocence or guilt about having temporarily replaced his own mother with a different motherly figure, and the instrumentation, timbre, articulation, and melody in this song alert the listener to the fact that the lyrics about an evil giant are not true.

While the narrative alone lends itself to many lessons, the musical score of *Into the Woods* provides extensive insight that we could not possibly glean from just the plot. By creating

tension between the individuals and society and by supplying subtle nuances in its harmonic settings, Sondheim's score allows us to draw conclusions about the narrative that are carried only in the musical material, and that we would miss had we not been listening.

III. Lyrics

As Stephen Banfield points out, Sondheim is frequently regarded as the greatest lyricist to ever grace Broadway.²⁸ His tongue-in-cheek wit and ability to make the most unexpected words rhyme make the man a commonly acknowledged lyrical genius. In *Into the Woods*, his coy and subtle lyrical execution functions to paint two opposing pictures, one on the surface and one beneath it. Superficially, Sondheim's lyrics present a fun and childlike fairy tale story. But beneath that, his lyrics illustrate much darker things, particularly in the corruption of the characters' innocence.

Little Red Riding Hood's corruption is perhaps the most disturbing and blatant of the musical. As discussed in the section about plot, the song, "Hello, Little Girl," takes place during the wolf's ambiguously sexual encounter with Red in the woods. Taken at face value, the wolf wants to eat Red. But read through a different lens, the same lyrics indicate that the wolf wants to sexually seduce her:

"Look at that flesh,
Pink and plump.
Hello, little girl...
Tender and fresh,
Not one lump.
Hello, little girl..."

²⁸ Stephen Banfield, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 1.

Throughout the entire song, each and every line can be interpreted in both ways, and some lyrics are clearly more explicit than others: “Take your time, but slow, little girl,” “Think of that scrumptious carnality twice in one day, there’s no possible way to describe how you feel.” It’s almost hard to believe children’s stories are the basis for those lyrics.

In “I Know Things Now,” taking place after their encounter, the innuendo between the wolf and Red continues. Some lyrics are subtly sexual, illustrating the mixed emotions of excitement and fear that accompany one’s first sexual experience:

“When he said, ‘Come in!’
With that sickening grin,
How could I know what was in store?
Once his teeth were bared,
Though I really got scared—
Well, excited and scared.”

Other lyrics, in contrast, are so unsubtle that it is difficult to apply the surface-level interpretation:

“And he showed me things,
Many beautiful things,
That I hadn’t thought to explore.
They were off my path,
So I never had dared.
I had been so careful
I never had cared.

And he made me feel excited—

Well, excited and scared.”

While the plot and stage action indicate that what is happening in Red’s story line parallels the classic Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale, it is through Sondheim’s tongue-in-cheek lyrics that we can gain a deeper meaning, and Red’s character becomes substantially darker and more complex.

Similarly to Red’s story line, Jack’s portrays a sexual coming of age. Interestingly, Sondheim penned two versions of Jack’s song, “Giants in the Sky.” The first, rejected, version points to a Freudian interpretation, where Jack’s experience with the giantess is both nurturing and sexual:

“And I asked for food

And I asked for rest

And she saw me fed

And she made me guest

And she made a bed of her big soft giant breast

Up in the sky.”²⁹

In the second, canonical, version, this is more subtle, and the sexual connection actually comes from an allusion to Red’s previous sexual experience with the wolf, referencing her post-corruption lyric, “And I know things now, many valuable things, that I hadn’t known before.”

“And she gives you food

And she gives you rest

And she draws you close

To her giant breast,

²⁹ Ibid., 384

And you know things now that you never knew before,
Not till the sky.”

As was the case with Red and the wolf, these lyrics can be interpreted both superficially and more sexually. While on the surface, Jack simply learned of a new type of creature—a race of giants who live in the sky—when read deeper, Jack experiences his first love on his journey to the sky, developing an Oedipal infatuation with the giantess.

The last number I will discuss lyrically is the finale of *Into the Woods*. This work starts with the cast rattling off various vapid and innocuous “moral of the story” phrases: “Every knot was once a straight rope,” “The knife that is sharp today may be dull tomorrow.” When the song “Children Will Listen” begins, the witch tells the audience to be careful what we say or do, because our actions may have an impact on the children. But this is also tongue-in-cheek, as the preceding scene consisted of all of the corrupted children of the story working together to slaughter a figure that was once nurturing and good. It could be interpreted that this song is an afterthought and criticism of the plot, which, taken at face value, seems to have a happy ending with the slaying of the giantess. Or perhaps it is telling us that it was not a happy ending at all, and that the innocent children grew up to slay the nurturing giantess because of what they learned from their elders. But in the context of the aphorisms that begin the finale, this message seems equally trite, and appears as though the characters are *saying* that they have learned things, but it is nothing more than just another aphorism, and the corruption of children will continue beyond the scope of this story.

While these three discussions of Red, Jack, and the finale indicate that Sondheim’s lyrics function to illustrate simultaneous pictures throughout *Into the Woods*, contrasting superficial fairy tales with darker messages of corruption and cynicism, it is a thread that underpins the

entirety of the musical, and applies to all of the characters, including Cinderella and the baker and his wife. By employing tongue-in-cheek wit and double entendres, Sondheim masterfully creates two concurrent stories throughout *Into the Woods*: one of enjoyable characters from our childhood all getting to meet one another in the magical woods, and one of the methodical corruption of those characters.

IV. Casting

When *Into the Woods* premiered in New York in 1987 at the Martin Beck Theatre, several single actors played multiple characters in the production.³⁰ Tom Aldredge portrayed the narrator as well as the baker's father (the "mysterious man" for much of the plot); Merle Louise played the role of Cinderella's mother, Little Red Riding Hood's "Granny," and the Giantess; and Robert Westenberg appeared as both the wolf and Cinderella's prince. This continuity of character leads the audience to make connections between each of the characters portrayed by any given actor because of this commonality between them, and these connections work to support the messages of the narrative.

Tom Aldredge represents a link between the narrator and the baker's father. The connection between these characters functions within the theme of self-obsessedness that underlies *Into the Woods*: both characters represent the important factors in life that we overlook until their absence causes change. The fairy tale characters don't acknowledge the narrator for the majority of the plot until the end, when they consider sacrificing him to the Giantess. Only then do they realize that without him, they wouldn't have any guidance in their lives, and even at that moment, they do not acknowledge that reality until the narrator himself points it out to them.

³⁰ Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods*, 3.

Similarly, the mysterious man in the woods seems for most of the plot to be an extraneous character, appearing only occasionally in the woods without offering much to the narrative. No one engages him in discussion or tries to uncover his story, but we discover in the end that he is the root of the entire plot; were it not for the baker's father stealing beans from the witch's yard, the witch would have never cast a spell on the baker's family, and the baker and his wife would not have needed to go into the woods to find ingredients for the witch's potion in exchange for a reversal of that spell.

In these ways, Tom Aldredge himself comes to represent one of the morals of *Into the Woods*: that if we aren't careful and gracious, we may not know some of the important things in our lives until they are gone and it is too late. This is a theme for other characters in the story as well. The witch doesn't understand how much her powers mean to her, placing higher emphasis on external beauty, until she exchanges those powers for a better physical appearance. Similarly, the princes spend the first act of *Into the Woods* courting Cinderella and Rapunzel, believing finding love was their priority. But in the second act they realize that they really valued the process of courtship, not love, only becoming aware of this through marriage, when courtship was no longer (morally) possible.

Merle Louise similarly draws a connection between Cinderella's mother, Granny, and the Giantess. All three of these women are nurturing maternal figures: Cinderella's mother offers Cinderella guidance through her spirit residing in a tree, Granny provides company and comfort for Red, and the Giantess is a loving wife to the Giant and takes Jack into her home before he steals from her. Therefore Merle Louise's constant dying during *Into the Woods* represents a repeated blow to nurture and it becomes one of the most profound ways the story's dark message is conveyed.

Merle Louise dies three times (plus one false alarm) during the course of the narrative. In the form of Cinderella's mother, Louise's character has been dead all along, remaining only in the form of a spirit. When the wolf eats Granny, we assume the worst, but Granny ends up surviving the incident, providing a glimmer of hope. But in the scene with the Giantess—the same scene where the narrator sees his fate—Granny really does die, along with that glimmer of hope. Finally, in the end of the story, the characters slay the Giantess, Merle Louise's last living character, and in that moment, any nurturing figure in *Into the Woods* is lost. The final scene of the performance, where the characters warn the audience to be careful with their words and actions because “children will listen,” sheds light on the importance nurturing figures play, and how impossible an achievement of “happily ever after” is without them.

Finally, Robert Westenberg draws parallels between the wolf and Cinderella's prince. In the beginning of the story, the wolf corrupts Red, opening the door to sexual exploration. After this encounter and the wolf is slain, Red wears his hide, representing a continuation of sexual corruption even in the wolf's death, in the form now of Red herself. When Westenberg reappears as Cinderella's prince, he comes to represent a personification of the lust, corruption, insatiable appetite, and instant gratification readily apparent in the wolf. These characteristics are evident in Cinderella's prince both during his courtship of Cinderella and when he seduces the baker's wife. These themes of lust and greed underpin *Into the Woods* throughout the narrative, spanning from the beginning, when all of the characters are wishing for various things, until the end, when they all will sacrifice anyone they can to satisfy the vengeful Giantess.

By casting certain actors to portray multiple characters, we can gain a deeper understanding of some of the messages in *Into the Woods*: we must understand why things are the way that they are, and give credit where it is due; we must appreciate nurturing figures and

continue to pass encouragement and love to our children; and we must control our lust and greed. If we don't heed the warnings provided by Tom Aldredge, Merle Louise, and Robert Westenberg's characters, we may end up with similar fates to the characters in the fairy tales gone wrong in *Into the Woods*.

* * *

While on the surface it seems that *Into the Woods* is merely a complicated conglomerate of our favorite childhood stories, coming together in a fantasy world where Cinderella's prince can be the brother of Rapunzel's, Sondheim and Lapine in reality create a story that is substantially more meaningful. The plot presents to us two contrasting worlds, Act I and Act II, and the dark and cynical Act II gets the final say over the journey-driven and whimsical Act I; the music sets up a distinct dichotomy between the naïve cast members and the all-too-aware judgmental orchestra; the songs' lyrics reveal how what seems to be one thing on the surface can easily be hiding something else—something darker—underneath that surface; and the casting decisions of the original Broadway cast create parallels between several characters who aren't immediately similar, but may have more in common than we readily may think. By intricately confusing the concepts of triviality and cynicism, Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine create a work with *Into the Woods* that presents to the audience numerous underlying issues that force us to reevaluate our own priorities and consider the ways our actions affect others before making decisions. Because if *Into the Woods* teaches an astute audience member one thing, it is that if we follow our self-serving instincts, it could lead not only to self-destruction, but to the destruction of morality as a whole.

CHAPTER 3:

Comprehensibility in the Formal Structures of Schoenberg's Suite Op. 29

In a lecture at Princeton University in January 1934, Arnold Schoenberg discussed some of the main principles of his musical philosophy. Addressing his theories of aesthetics in particular, he stated that “the use of conventional means of structural articulation is as little a matter of aesthetics as any other aids in projecting a structure might be; rather, it is a question of comprehensibility.”³¹ This topic of comprehensibility permeates several of Schoenberg’s theoretical writings, and proves to be a central point of emphasis over a lengthy span of time. As early as 1917, Schoenberg declared comprehensibility a necessity for conveying the idea of any musical work: “Comprehensibility is a requirement...of those in need of communication [and] of those whose perceptions are keen...The more comprehensible a form and content, the larger the circle of those affected by it.”³² Twenty-four years later, in his famous 1941 essay “Composition with Twelve Tones,” his emphasis on comprehensibility remained pivotal: “Form in the arts, and especially in music, aims primarily at comprehensibility.”³³

Throughout his writings, Schoenberg repeatedly stated that a comprehensible construction is the only method by which a composer can successfully relate the meaning and “idea” of a work to an audience. The way to achieve this task, he argues, is through coherence. Schoenberg defines coherence, which is “based on repetition” and “what binds individual phenomena into forms,” as the degree to which the elements of a work are related to one

³¹ Claudio Spies, “Vortrag / 12 T K / Princeton,” in *Perspectives of New Music* 13/1 (Fall–Winter 1974), 113.

³² Arnold Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, ed. Severine Neff, trans. Charlotte M. Cross and Severine Neff (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 9.

³³ Arnold Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve Tones,” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1974), 215.

another.³⁴ This relatedness can be achieved through repeated material within the piece and by working within a discourse familiar to the audience: “If a person is meant to understand what another is saying to him, the first presupposition is that the speaker use such signs or means of expression as are known to the listener.”³⁵ According to Schoenberg’s philosophy, the more coherent a work is, the more comprehensible to audiences it will be, and the more people will understand the composer’s idea. If elements of a work are new or unfamiliar, other elements need to be recognizable to elucidate those contrasts. To Schoenberg, a good composition was coherent enough to achieve comprehensibility, but not so coherent as to overuse repetition and thus become monotonous.³⁶

When Schoenberg began composing twelve-tone music in the early 1920s, it became especially important to him to ensure that his compositions were comprehensible. Several of his writings demonstrate that he was aware of the need to pay extra attention when composing twelve-tone music so as to ensure that comprehensibility could be achieved while employing this new style. In the essay “Composition with Twelve Tones,” for instance, he wrote that twelve-tone composition had “no aim other than comprehensibility” and that the emancipation of the dissonance in twelve-tone music was the equivalent to “consonance’s comprehensibility” in earlier tonal music.³⁷

The earliest of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone works have something notable in common: they are all composed using traditional formal structures. The Suite for Piano, Op. 25, for example, consists of a prelude, gavotte, intermezzo, minuet and trio, and a gigue. “Wind Quintet,” Op. 26,

³⁴ Arnold Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, 9.

³⁵ Ibid., 13. Hans Robert Jauss has explored this idea of utilizing the audience’s familiar discourse to set up expectations in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1982). In this book he coins the phrase “horizon of expectations” which has become common in dialogue on this subject within reception studies.

³⁶ Ibid., 118–9.

³⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve Tones,” 215–7.

as Pierre Boulez has pointed out, “has the four movements of a Beethoven Sonata.”³⁸ The Op. 29 Suite for piano, E \flat clarinet, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin, viola, and cello, composed in 1924-26, follows suit: The first movement is an overture in a modified sonata form, the second a binary dance form (*Tanzschritte*), the third a theme and variations, and the fourth a binary gigue. All of these forms have built-in constructs that allow for, and even demand, repetition and development of earlier material.

Much has been said about traditional forms in twelve-tone composition. Andrew Mead has discussed the frequency with which critics like Pierre Boulez have stated that Schoenberg merely used traditional forms as “shells” or “skins” that he filled with twelve-tone material.³⁹ He argues that an analysis of some of this early twelve-tone music, specifically Op. 26, demonstrates that this is not the case, and that these forms actually work just as well with twelve-tone music as they did with twelve-tone’s tonal forerunners. I would like to extend this reasoning: not only do these forms work equally well in twelve-tone composition, but their inherently repetitive construction and established prominence in the audience’s preexisting musical experience promote comprehensibility.

Much less has been written about Op. 29 than its twelve-tone predecessors. The literature that does exist about the work focuses primarily on the pitch structures and less on its employment of traditional forms, and does not explore in depth how the work relates to Schoenberg’s writings on twelve-tone composition. As one of Schoenberg’s early twelve-tone works operating according to traditional formal structures, however, we should examine how

³⁸ Pierre Boulez, “Trajectories: Ravel, Stravinsky, Schoenberg,” in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, trans. Stephen Walsh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 199.

³⁹ Andrew Mead, “‘Tonal’ Forms in Arnold Schoenberg’s Twelve-Tone Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 9 (1987): 67–92. See the footnotes on pages 67–8 for literature on this criticism.

these forms contribute to the piece's comprehensibility, since Schoenberg's written theories on twelve-tone composition emphasize its importance so frequently.

In this paper, I will demonstrate in four sections how Schoenberg's employment of traditional and familiar formal structures in Op. 29 exemplifies his philosophy on comprehensibility. First, I will give an overview of Schoenberg's writings on the topic, and clearly define the terms he uses in his philosophy on comprehensibility. Then I will discuss the existing analytical literature on Op. 29, addressing research that has been done on the work and the critical responses to that research. The third section will bridge these discussions by demonstrating how Schoenberg's writings on comprehensibility are manifested in the form of Op. 29; the fourth section will focus specifically on the Theme and Variations movement to show in depth how comprehensibility is achieved, and how this traditional form clearly lends itself to the presentation of Schoenberg's philosophy on this subject.

I. "Comprehensibility" in Schoenberg's Theoretical Writings

In an unpublished manuscript dating from 1934, Schoenberg defines resemblance as "partly equal, partly different."⁴⁰ He explains this in terms of three sets: set A consists of a, b, c, d, and e; set B consists of f, g, h, i, j and k; set C consists of a, d, e, f, h, j, and k. Because they are constructed of entirely different elements, set A is not related to set B. Because set C holds three elements in common with set A and four elements in common with set B, it is related to each, but is more related to set B. As a result, while set A is not related to set B, set C can be used as a connector to relate them: a person familiar with set A can comprehend set C because of the coherence of elements a, d, and e. Once set C is comprehended and instilled in the person's

⁴⁰ Arnold Schoenberg, "Manuscript No. 9," in *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of its Presentation*, ed. and trans. Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 304.

knowledge, that person can then comprehend set B because of the coherence of elements f, h, j, and k to the familiar set C. Because of these coherences, one can comprehend set B having previously been only familiar with set A, but only by means of set C.

In other words, Schoenberg believes it is entirely possible for someone eventually to comprehend an entirely new idea, but it must be reached gradually and by means of familiar material. In musical language, if something is new to a listener in a piece, other elements of that piece must not be new. This strategy not only keeps listeners from being overwhelmed, but also allows them to distinguish clearly between aspects that are new and those that are unfamiliar, and thus more important. These similarities, in Schoenberg's terminology, produce coherence: "Related or similar things can be brought into connection with one another because they have coherence." Thus, coherence yields comprehensibility.⁴¹

Schoenberg makes it very clear that while coherence is defined by the sameness of elements in a piece, its effect is to illuminate its opposite: by having clear similarities between elements, the differences become increasingly evident. For this reason, he clarifies that while coherence is important, it is just as important to avoid too much similarity, as it leads to monotony. Each repetition, therefore, must never exist purely for the sake of repetition, but for one of three reasons: to establish an idea, elaborating on shapes and showing them in different ways; to introduce a subordinate idea; or to exhibit new characteristics.⁴² These guidelines for coherence demonstrate that while Schoenberg stressed a need for repetition for clarity, he also stressed that music needs always to remain captivating through constant development.

While most of Schoenberg's writings simply emphasize comprehensibility as a requirement, his *Gedanke* Manuscripts dedicate pages to the topic, outlining twenty-four "Laws

⁴¹ Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of its Presentation*, 118.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 124-5.

of Comprehensibility.”⁴³ He writes: “The laws of comprehensibility must be understood with especial precision and strictness because of the difficulties inherent in music...[E]very idea must be presented so that the listener’s power of comprehension can follow it. The following laws meet these difficulties.” These laws each aim to emphasize that it is the composer’s responsibility to make clear to the listener what is important. These laws include:

- I. What is stated only once cannot be understood as important.
- II. Main and subordinate matters must be very clearly distinguished through their means of presentation.
- III. Main matters require more frequent presentation of the ideas that are to be developed....
- VI. The presentation of the idea will have to suit the powers of comprehension of the intended listener....
- VII. The presentation of ideas is based on the laws of musical coherence....
- XI. According to the laws of coherence, all new gestalten⁴⁴ and hence also all new phrases, sentences, themes, etc., come about through the variation of the basic motive. This means that some of its characteristics will be retained and others (meaningfully) altered.
- XII. Clearly, the more the characteristics of the motive are altered and the more unfamiliar the newly introduced gestalten, the more difficult it will be to grasp the coherence...
- XVI. The importance of a gestalt, etc., will be made known through repetition....
- XXII. The dance forms are among the simplest forms. For example, the waltz of earlier composers repeats the beginning phrase with small, insignificant alterations, usually three or four times, often even six or seven times. Hence the popular effect.

Although I have not listed all of the Laws of Comprehensibility here, it should be clear that this document emphasizes that coherence through repetition is the composer’s main tool for communicating what is more important and what is less important to the listener.

This list also addresses a second tool for comprehensibility: the use of the listener’s familiar language implied by Law VI. In his essay “Theory of Form,” Schoenberg writes: “Through [something’s] relationship, analogy with, similarity to other things we think, feel and sense, we are able to grasp it as similar to us, appropriate to us, and related to us. So one must

⁴³ Ibid., 111-6. The laws are actually only listed to twenty-three; Schoenberg uses the number VI twice.

⁴⁴ Shapes.

show how the material, against or in accordance with its own aim, is forced by art—by fulfilling the demands of comprehensibility—to adapt itself to such conditions.”⁴⁵ This means that the same musical idea could be presented in different ways depending on the intended audience, in order to draw on that audience’s knowledge, language, and experience.

A close reading of Schoenberg’s writings on comprehensibility makes it clear that this was a concept that Schoenberg had in mind in every one of his compositions. Therefore an analysis of any of his works should consider how its formal constructs promote these concepts. Because the Suite was a set of forms that audiences in the early 20th century were accustomed to, the Suite Op. 29, through its title alone, already aims for comprehensibility through familiar language. The following sections will demonstrate that the musical elements of the work could be seen to exemplify his writings on coherence and comprehensibility in several ways.

II. Op. 29: The Analytical Literature

Because Op. 29 is substantially less explored than the twelve-tone music written before it, what little has been said about the work is important for this discussion. Martha Hyde’s book *Schoenberg’s Twelve-Tone Harmony: The Suite Op. 29 and the Compositional Sketches* offers both a substantial background on twelve-tone music and a comprehensive analysis of the row forms in Op. 29, drawing on the original manuscript.⁴⁶ Her book is thorough in its discussion of the pitch construction of the Suite. She explicates Schoenberg’s row forms in the piece, explaining how harmony is structured within one or between multiple rows. As the book progresses, Hyde addresses each movement of the suite and explains how these rows function to

⁴⁵ Arnold Schoenberg, “Theory of Form,” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1974) 253.

⁴⁶ Martha M. Hyde, *Schoenberg’s Twelve-Tone Harmony: The Suite Op. 29 and the Compositional Sketches* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1982).

create a twelve-tone harmonic structure. The end of her book addresses twelve-tone meter and the metrical issues that arise within the Suite. In the next section of this discussion, I will draw on some of Hyde's analysis that is relevant to the comprehensibility of Op. 29.

A thorough and complete understanding of the Suite Op. 29 certainly demands an in-depth study of Hyde's book, but it also requires much more. Her selected bibliography lacks many of Schoenberg's analytical writings that would help to understand his compositional process, and understandably so: Hyde's book, published in 1982, predates the publication of several of Schoenberg's writings on compositional philosophy.⁴⁷ Thus, while the book strives to address the compositional techniques of Op. 29, it fails, at no fault of the author, to provide a complete demonstration of the work's comprehensibility.

A second book to address Op. 29 is Silvina Milstein's *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms*, which contains a chapter dedicated to the Suite.⁴⁸ This book, similar to Hyde's, contains primarily pitch-related analytical content, but in contrast to Hyde, her book references several of Schoenberg's theoretical writings. In her chapter on Op. 29, Milstein specifically examines the Overture movement, and analyzes the score less in terms of the harmonic structure that Hyde explored, and more in terms of the "development of compositional ideas."⁴⁹ This approach clearly takes into account Schoenberg's theoretical philosophy that music is not merely about

⁴⁷ Most specifically, two sources published after Hyde's book address coherence and comprehensibility in depth: Arnold Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, and Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*. Hyde lists only *Style and Idea* and the essay "Composition with Twelve Tones" in her selected bibliography, but chronologically, much of *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, and Instruction in Form* was written before the essays in *Style and Idea*, and much of *The Musical Idea* was written after. Therefore, although these writings were not published at the time of Hyde's book, they were nevertheless relevant to the writings with which she was engaged.

⁴⁸ Silvina Milstein, *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

how a piece is composed, but about the musical idea that is conveyed in each piece as a whole.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, this book was also published before the major Schoenberg writings edited by Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff were issued in the mid-1990s; as a result Milstein fails to address these points of view in her analysis.

Because the foreword to Milstein's book points to a more holistic approach to analysis, several reviews have noted that it still has some shortcomings in this regard: Severine Neff, in her review for *Music Theory Spectrum*, states: "Milstein seems unperturbed that her interpretations of Schoenberg's theoretical concepts are antithetical to musical principles discussed at length in his books and essays."⁵¹ Joseph Auner's review of the book for *the Journal of Music Theory* echoes this sentiment: "While the references to Schoenberg's writings and sketches provide a good starting point for such an approach, the analyses of the individual pieces focus almost exclusively—as the title indicates—on the 'notes, sets, and forms.' The narrow focus on the notes causes her to miss many opportunities for relevant historical commentary."⁵²

Finally, Ethan Haimo's book *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of his Twelve-tone Method, 1914-1928* dedicates a chapter to "ambitious projects," including Op. 29.⁵³ This book stands apart from the others in that it takes special interest in the work's formal structures in addition to its pitch content. His exploration of form, however, is still undertaken from the point of view of the tone row, showing how different inversions and combinations of the row are

⁵⁰ Schoenberg argues that the point of a piece is the musical idea (*Gedanke*), which is conveyed in the "totality of a piece". See Arnold Schoenberg, "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1974), 123-4.

⁵¹ Severine Neff, "Review of *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms*, by Silvina Milstein," *Music Theory Spectrum* 16/1 (Spring 1994), 110.

⁵² Joseph Auner, "Review of *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms*, by Silvina Milstein," *Journal of Music Theory* 38/2 (Autumn 1994), 323.

⁵³ Ethan Haimo, "Ambitious Projects: The Wind Quintet, Op. 26 and The Suite, Op. 29, 1923-1926," in *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of his Twelve-tone Method, 1914-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 70-106.

presented in its traditional structures. Formal function, in light of Schoenberg's writings on the subject, is not addressed. Further, the book was published in 1990, also placing it before the publication of many of Schoenberg's most important theoretical documents.

These three books are, to my knowledge, the only substantial analyses published in English of Op. 29. Owing to their limitations and shortcomings, as discussed above, it is important to continue to explore Op. 29 taking into account Schoenberg's writings, particularly on comprehensibility, because it is a concept that turned out to be central in his compositional philosophy. Because the formal structures are the primary means by which this concept is most clearly manifested in the Suite, it is important to analyze them to relate the piece to those writings.

III. Comprehensibility and Op. 29

A. COMPREHENSIBILITY OF PITCH STRUCTURE⁵⁴

As explained in Section I, Schoenberg emphasized repetition as a means of achieving comprehensibility in his music. While most of this discussion focuses on the form of each movement of Op. 29, and the inherent repetition demanded by those forms, the twelve-tone construction Schoenberg employs in the piece also illustrates his implementation of this philosophy. A close look at Schoenberg's row, as well as the various manipulations of that row, shows us that there are relationships and patterns that necessarily impel the music composed from it to favor certain sonorities over others, achieving coherence, and thus comprehensibility, through the repetition of those sonorities.

The initial presentation of the row is: E \flat , G, F \sharp , B \flat , D, B, C, A, A \flat , E, F, D \flat . Thus the

⁵⁴ Much of this discussion is inspired by Hyde, *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Harmony*, drawing especially from her discussion of the basic structure of the set and its resulting combinatoriality, pp. 25-61.

matrix derived from this row is shown in Figure 3.1, with the initial presentation shaded.⁵⁵

Figure 3.1

	I ₀	I ₄	I ₃	I ₇	I ₁₁	I ₈	I ₉	I ₆	I ₅	I ₁	I ₂	I ₁₀	
P ₀ →	0	4	3	7	e	8	9	6	5	1	2	t	←R ₀
P ₈ →	8	0	e	3	7	4	5	2	1	9	t	6	←R ₈
P ₉ →	9	1	0	4	8	5	6	3	2	t	e	7	←R ₉
P ₅ →	5	9	8	0	4	1	2	e	t	6	7	3	←R ₅
P ₁ →	1	5	4	8	0	9	t	7	6	2	3	e	←R ₁
P ₄ →	4	8	7	e	3	0	1	t	9	5	6	2	←R ₄
P ₃ →	3	7	6	t	2	e	0	9	8	4	5	1	←R ₃
P ₆ →	6	t	9	1	5	2	3	0	e	7	8	4	←R ₆
P ₇ →	7	e	t	2	6	3	4	1	0	8	9	5	←R ₇
P ₁₁ →	e	3	2	6	t	7	8	5	4	0	1	9	←R ₁₁
P ₁₀ →	t	2	1	5	9	6	7	4	3	e	0	8	←R ₁₀
P ₂ →	2	6	5	9	1	t	e	8	7	3	4	0	←R ₂
	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	
	RI ₀	RI ₄	RI ₃	RI ₇	RI ₁₁	RI ₈	RI ₉	RI ₆	RI ₅	RI ₁	RI ₂	RI ₁₀	

The fact that there are twelve unique pitches allows for the partitioning of the matrix into several discrete groups: trichords, tetrachords, and hexachords. Figure 3.2 shows the matrix divided into each row’s discrete trichords.

⁵⁵ I will be using notation and vocabulary suggested by Joseph Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd Edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson, 2005). Pitch classes will be referred to in integer notation, with C=0. Prime rows will be denoted with “P” with the corresponding number the first pitch of that row, so P₀ is the prime row that begins on C. Inversional rows will be denoted with “I” and similarly possess a corresponding number that denotes the first pitch of the row, so I₀ is the inversionsal row beginning on C. Retrograde rows will be referred to with “R” and the corresponding number is the *last* pitch of that row, so R₀ is the retrograde of P₀. Retrograde inversionsal rows will be referred to with “RI” and the corresponding number will again be the last pitch of the row, so RI₀ is the retrograde of I₀.

Figure 3.2

	I ₀	I ₄	I ₃	I ₇	I ₁₁	I ₈	I ₉	I ₆	I ₅	I ₁	I ₂	I ₁₀	
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
P ₀ →	0	4	3	7	e	8	9	6	5	1	2	t	←R ₀
P ₈ →	8	0	e	3	7	4	5	2	1	9	t	6	←R ₈
P ₉ →	9	1	0	4	8	5	6	3	2	t	e	7	←R ₉
P ₅ →	5	9	8	0	4	1	2	e	t	6	7	3	←R ₅
P ₁ →	1	5	4	8	0	9	t	7	6	2	3	e	←R ₁
P ₄ →	4	8	7	e	3	0	1	t	9	5	6	2	←R ₄
P ₃ →	3	7	6	t	2	e	0	9	8	4	5	1	←R ₃
P ₆ →	6	t	9	1	5	2	3	0	e	7	8	4	←R ₆
P ₇ →	7	e	t	2	6	3	4	1	0	8	9	5	←R ₇
P ₁₁ →	e	3	2	6	t	7	8	5	4	0	1	9	←R ₁₁
P ₁₀ →	t	2	1	5	9	6	7	4	3	e	0	8	←R ₁₀
P ₂ →	2	6	5	9	1	t	e	8	7	3	4	0	←R ₂
	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	
	RI ₀	RI ₄	RI ₃	RI ₇	RI ₁₁	RI ₈	RI ₉	RI ₆	RI ₅	RI ₁	RI ₂	RI ₁₀	

Each trichord is similar to the others in that they all have the same sonority: 014. This property alone epitomizes Schoenberg's emphasis on consistency and repetition. But looking at discrete trichords also provides further insight into relationships resulting from Schoenberg's choice of row: each prime row has a corresponding inversion row with the same unordered discrete trichords. For instance, P₀ contains the trichords {043} {7e8} {965} {12t}. I₉, similarly, contains the trichords {956} {2t1} {034} {87e}. Each discrete trichord in P₀, therefore, has the same pitch content as one of the discrete trichords in I₉. The trichordal row pairings are as follows: P₀:I₉, P₈:I₅, P₉:I₆, P₅:I₂, P₁:I₁₀, P₄:I₁, P₃:I₀, P₆:I₃, P₇:I₄, P₁₁:I₈, P₁₀:I₇, and P₂:I₁₁. Because of these relationships, the corresponding rows will sound even more similar than their transposition-inversional relationship already causes them to. This sonic similarity lends itself to

comprehensibility.

Figure 3.3 shows the matrix divided into discrete tetrachords.

Figure 3.3

	I ₀	I ₄	I ₃	I ₇	I ₁₁	I ₈	I ₉	I ₆	I ₅	I ₁	I ₂	I ₁₀	
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
P ₀ →	0	4	3	7	e	8	9	6	5	1	2	t	←R ₀
P ₈ →	8	0	e	3	7	4	5	2	1	9	t	6	←R ₈
P ₉ →	9	1	0	4	8	5	6	3	2	t	e	7	←R ₉
P ₅ →	5	9	8	0	4	1	2	e	t	6	7	3	←R ₅
P ₁ →	1	5	4	8	0	9	t	7	6	2	3	e	←R ₁
P ₄ →	4	8	7	e	3	0	1	t	9	5	6	2	←R ₄
P ₃ →	3	7	6	t	2	e	0	9	8	4	5	1	←R ₃
P ₆ →	6	t	9	1	5	2	3	0	e	7	8	4	←R ₆
P ₇ →	7	e	t	2	6	3	4	1	0	8	9	5	←R ₇
P ₁₁ →	e	3	2	6	t	7	8	5	4	0	1	9	←R ₁₁
P ₁₀ →	t	2	1	5	9	6	7	4	3	e	0	8	←R ₁₀
P ₂ →	2	6	5	9	1	t	e	8	7	3	4	0	←R ₂
	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	
	RI ₀	RI ₄	RI ₃	RI ₇	RI ₁₁	RI ₈	RI ₉	RI ₆	RI ₅	RI ₁	RI ₂	RI ₁₀	

Similarly to the spliced trichords, a look at the tetrachords shows sonority relationships that exploit the row's inherent coherence. For each row form, there exist three other row forms—one of each manipulation type—that begin with the same unordered tetrachord. For instance, P₀ begins with the tetrachord {0437}. The same can be said for R₂, I₇, and RI₅. Therefore, a simultaneous attack of the pitches C, E \flat , E, and G could indicate the start of any of those row forms. This contributes to coherence, as this causes a resemblance, as defined on page 60, between those four row forms. All of the rows that are related by opening discrete tetrachord are as follows:

1: P₀, R₂, I₉, RI₅

2: P₈, R₁₀, I₃, RI₁

3: P₉, R₁₁, I₄, RI₂

4: P₅, R₇, I₀, RI₁₀

5: P₁, R₃, I₈, RI₆

6: P₄, R₆, I₁₁, RI₉

7: P₃, R₅, I₁₀, RI₈

8: P₆, R₈, I₁, RI₁₁

9: P₇, R₉, I₂, RI₀

10: P₁₁, R₁, I₆, RI₄

11: P₁₀, R₀, I₅, RI₃

12: P₂, R₄, I₉, RI₇

Each of the outer tetrachords, as a result, is a 0347 sonority. Schoenberg exploits these relationships to bring coherence to individual movements. The *Tanzschritte*, for instance, makes use of several row manipulations, but for the melody composes exclusively within groups 4, 5, and 7 as listed above. Similarly, if a movement features rows that draw from several different groups, a wide variety of sonorities is achieved. This can be seen in the overture, during which the melody draws from rows in tetrachord groups 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12. Appropriately for an overture, this introduces the listener right away to several possible sonorities the row can present throughout the work as a whole.

Additionally, the middle tetrachord in each prime is the same *ordered* middle tetrachord of the RI form in its group. For instance, the middle tetrachord of P₀ is, ordered, {e896}, as is the middle tetrachord of RI₅. It follows that for each middle tetrachord of any retrograde row, the inversion row with which it is tetrachordally grouped contains the same ordered middle tetrachord (the middle tetrachord of R₂, {8et1}, is the same as the middle tetrachord of I₇). The result of this characteristic is that in any presentation of any row in Op. 29, the middle tetrachord will have a 0235 sonority surrounded by 0347 sonorities at the extremes of the row. Again, these relationships contribute to a resemblance that caters to Schoenberg's vision of working within a comprehensible pitch domain.

Finally, the matrix can be spliced into hexachords, as shown in Figure 3.4. Each discrete hexachord is a 014589 sonority, creating an all-combinatorial row. That is to say, each hexachord can create an aggregate—a set of twelve unique tones—with itself by performing a

basic transformation and transposition on it. Looking at Figure 3.4, we can observe that there are four unordered hexachords at play in this matrix:

1. {0437e8}, as in P₀
2. {6t9152}, as in P₆
3. {910485}, as in P₉
4. {376t2e}, as in P₃.

The first, {0437e8}, creates an aggregate with the second, {6t9152}, and the third, {910485}, creates an aggregate with the fourth, {376t2e}. Similarly to the tetrachordal groups, Schoenberg creates relationships through hexachordal groups as well. By drawing on rows from the same hexachordal group, similar sonorities are repeated, promoting coherence. For instance, in the melody throughout the overture, Schoenberg uses rows in hexachordal group 3 twice as much as any other group.⁵⁶ This creates a coherence around that sonority throughout the movement. The *Tanzschritte* is even more hexachordally coherent, with the melody drawing exclusively from hexachordal groups 3 and 4.

This row also contains great potential for hexachordal combinatoriality, during which two simultaneous horizontal presentations of row forms derived from the prime row create two vertical aggregates. The potential is high because any row form that begins with one discrete hexachord can be paired with one of several other row forms that begin with that hexachord's complement to create an aggregate. For instance, P₀, P₈, P₄, R₂, R₁₀, R₆, I₃, P₇, I₁₁, RI₁, RI₅, and RI₉ all begin with the unordered hexachord {03478e}. Therefore, any of those row forms can create a vertical aggregate when presented simultaneously with any row form that begins with the complement of that hexachord, {12569t}: P₂, P₁₀, P₆, R₀, R₈, R₄, I₁, I₅, I₉, RI₃, RI₇, and RI₁₁. Similarly, any row beginning with the unordered hexachord {014589} can create a vertical

⁵⁶ I refer to a row as belonging to a hexachordal group based on the first discrete hexachord in that row.

aggregate when presented simultaneously with any row form beginning with its unordered complement, {2367te}.

Figure 3.4

	I ₀	I ₄	I ₃	I ₇	I ₁₁	I ₈	I ₉	I ₆	I ₅	I ₁	I ₂	I ₁₀	
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
P ₀ →	0	4	3	7	e	8	9	6	5	1	2	t	←R ₀
P ₈ →	8	0	e	3	7	4	5	2	1	9	t	6	←R ₈
P ₉ →	9	1	0	4	8	5	6	3	2	t	e	7	←R ₉
P ₅ →	5	9	8	0	4	1	2	e	t	6	7	3	←R ₅
P ₁ →	1	5	4	8	0	9	t	7	6	2	3	e	←R ₁
P ₄ →	4	8	7	e	3	0	1	t	9	5	6	2	←R ₄
P ₃ →	3	7	6	t	2	e	0	9	8	4	5	1	←R ₃
P ₆ →	6	t	9	1	5	2	3	0	e	7	8	4	←R ₆
P ₇ →	7	e	t	2	6	3	4	1	0	8	9	5	←R ₇
P ₁₁ →	e	3	2	6	t	7	8	5	4	0	1	9	←R ₁₁
P ₁₀ →	t	2	1	5	9	6	7	4	3	e	0	8	←R ₁₀
P ₂ →	2	6	5	9	1	t	e	8	7	3	4	0	←R ₂
	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	
	RI ₀	RI ₄	RI ₃	RI ₇	RI ₁₁	RI ₈	RI ₉	RI ₆	RI ₅	RI ₁	RI ₂	RI ₁₀	

Schoenberg exploits the hexachordal combinatoriality of this row from the very beginning of the work. Vertically, all of the instruments present P₃ together followed by I₈, with the winds and strings taking the first hexachord of each respective row, and the piano articulating the second (see Example 3.1a). Horizontally, the winds and strings present a group 4 row followed by a group 3 row (due to simultaneous attack, they can be interpreted as any row from those groups, including, of course, P₃ and I₈). Beneath the winds and strings, the piano articulates the second hexachord of P₃ followed by the second hexachord of I₈, creating a horizontal aggregate that is itself not a row form (See example 3.1b).

Allegretto (♩ = 72) Sehr flott

kl Kl (oder Flöte)
Kl
Bs Kl (oder Fagott)
Gg
Br
Ve
Klav

The image shows a musical score for the opening of an overture. The title is "Allegretto (♩ = 72) Sehr flott". The score is arranged in two systems. The top system contains six staves for woodwinds and strings: Kl (Klarinetten), Kl (Klarinetten), Bs Kl (Bassklarinette oder Fagott), Gg (Geige), Br (Bratsche), and Ve (Viola). The bottom system contains two staves for the piano (Klav). The music is in 6/8 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked "Allegretto" with a quarter note equal to 72 beats per minute, and the performance instruction is "Sehr flott". The score is annotated with vertical lines and boxes, indicating specific rhythmic or melodic groups. The piano part features dynamic markings of *f* and *sf*.

Example 3.1a: Vertical rows in opening of overture. P₃ on the left, I₈ on the right.

Allegretto (♩ = 72) Sehr flott

kl Kl (oder Flöte)
Kl
Bs Kl (oder Fagott)
Gg
Br
Ve
Klav

This image shows the same musical score as Example 3.1a, but with a different analytical focus. It highlights horizontal presentations of specific groups. Two boxes at the top, labeled "group 4" and "group 3", encompass the woodwind and string parts across several measures. A larger box at the bottom, labeled "resulting aggregate", encompasses the piano accompaniment and the corresponding woodwind and string parts. The piano part is again marked with *f* and *sf* dynamics.

Example 3.1b: Horizontal presentation of group 4 (top left), group 3 (top right), and resulting aggregate (bottom).

By understanding all of the relationships that create resemblances between various row forms derived from the primary row of Op. 29, we can see that the pitch structure of the piece was in fact derived with a goal of comprehensibility. All of these patterns create particular common sonorities—most commonly 014, 0235, 0347, and 014589—that become increasingly familiar to listeners during their experiences with Op. 29, allowing them to better register coherences throughout the piece, and as a result comprehend it.

B. COMPREHENSIBILITY OF FORMAL STRUCTURE

Schoenberg's writings particularly emphasize two requirements for making a composition comprehensible: coherence in the form and familiarity of language. The Suite construction caters to both of those necessities. Traditionally used to refer to a set of dances, by the twentieth century the term had developed to be understood as any larger work containing related movements. The term also works as a reference to Bach, a composer with whom all audiences were familiar. When Op. 29 premiered in 1927, audiences were accustomed to Suite forms in the concert hall, but the twelve-tone music of this specific Suite was new. Because the listeners were being exposed to new pitch construction of the music they were hearing, the Suite was a perfect candidate for the form of the work.

The Suite consists of four movements, each of which is a traditional form. The first movement is an overture in a sonatina form without a development section; the second a scherzo entitled *Tanzschritte*, or “dance steps,” in a binary form; the third a theme and variations movement; and the fourth a binary gigue. Appendix II contains formal diagrams for each of these movements. Sonata, binary, and theme-and-variation forms all evoke what the audiences were accustomed to hearing, eliminating formal construction as an aspect of the work that the

audience was faced with understanding. This immediate understanding of form allowed the audience to work on understanding the *new* elements of the piece: the twelve-tone medium of conveying the idea. Each movement also complies in its form to Schoenberg's requirements of coherence by implementing repetition so that the audience can become familiar with motivic and thematic material as it becomes developed or recontextualized. This is not surprising: in Schoenberg's twenty-second law of comprehensibility, he mentions that dance forms promote the concept through their simple and repetitive formal constructs.⁵⁷

The Overture consists of two distinct sections, a recapitulation of each, and a coda. The first section is marked "*Sehr flott*" (very quickly), and is in ternary form. The first subsection is marked by thirty-second notes in the lower strings that return in the third subsection in the clarinets after a broader middle section with a violin solo. The second distinct section is markedly slower and the contrast with the first section is indicated not just in tempo, but also with a meter change from 6/8 to 3/8. This section contains a melody that travels through the instruments, but is interrupted in the middle by the thirty-second-note pattern from the beginning. After this interruption the melody continues until the meter changes back to 6/8, bringing material *exactly repeated* from the beginning of the movement. This must be interpreted as the recapitulation of the traditional overture form. A meter change to 3/8 then happens again and the second distinct section recapitulates. This time the melody is in a different voice and, although it is the same rhythm as the first appearance of the slow section, the pitches are altered: while the first instance of this melody presented R₂, the recapitulation is structured on P₁. The coda, in a dotted-sixteenth- and thirty-second-note pattern presented earlier in the movement, ends with the texture of the introduction.

⁵⁷ For a strictly analytical discussion of the form in Op. 29, please consult Hugh Wood's introduction to the score: Arnold Schoenberg, Suite Op. 29 (Vienna: Philharmonia Universal Edition, 1954).

This form of the overture is clearly consistent with Schoenberg's writings on coherence and comprehensibility. In the first distinct section, the reappearance of the thirty-second-note pattern alerts the listener that the rhythmic motive is important, according to Schoenberg's first and third laws of comprehensibility. When the second distinct section is interrupted by yet another occurrence of this rhythmic motive, it becomes even more apparent, and the listener, no matter how unfamiliar with twelve-tone music, will understand that the motive is central to the movement. The exact recapitulation of the first distinct section alerts the listener that the movement is in a familiar form, so that when the second distinct section is recapitulated but with the variance in pitch, parallel to the traditional sonatina form which recapitulates the second theme in the home key, the contrast between the initial statement of this material and the recapitulated version becomes more evident.

The second movement is in a traditional binary form. It is similar to the first movement in that it contains two large sections that are each recapitulated, though the forms of the distinct sections are different in this movement from the previous one.⁵⁸ Each section introduces two themes, one fast and one slower. In the second large section, similarly to the overture, material from the first section interrupts the melodies as they are being presented. During the recapitulation of the first large section, new material is introduced in the form of steady thirty-second notes appearing in each of the voices.

Again, the form of this movement can be understood in terms of Schoenberg's writings on coherence and comprehensibility. The incorporation of material from the first section in the second section alerts the listener that it is important, and the reappearance of thirty-second notes from the overture movement further implies that the figure is central not just to the movement,

⁵⁸ I refer to the first movement as a sonata form and the second as simply a rounded binary due to both formal expectations within a suite as well as each movement's character.

but to the whole work. Similarly to the overture, melodies are presented in the recapitulations of this movement in identical rhythms to the first statement, but with varied pitch. For instance, the secondary material appears as P_3 for the first iteration and P_5 for the second. The coherence of the rhythms draws attention to the contrast of the pitch, again allowing the listener to take note of what has changed.

The third movement, the theme and variations, is perhaps the most noticeably coherent, and will be explored in depth in the next section. The fourth movement is again in binary form and is presented both contrapuntally and homophonically. The first section contains a fugal segment followed by a homophonic segment, and ends with a thirty-second-note pattern. The second section is another fugal segment, this time the fugal exposition being an inversion of the first section's fugal exposition, followed by homophonic material. The end of this movement is marked by motives and themes from previous movements presented in each voice.

Schoenberg's writings once again elucidate the content of this movement. The two fugal sections cater to the audience's understanding of the fugue texture, and thus the listener is able to hear clearly that the exposition of the second fugue is an inversion of the initial fugal exposition. The reappearance of the thirty-second-note pattern makes the pattern a point of cohesion among all of the movements. The final measures of the piece further lend themselves to the work's overall coherence by restating thematic material from the previous movements and presenting them together.

The forms in these movements of Op. 29 not only promote comprehensibility; they inherently create it. By using traditional forms, Schoenberg had a framework for composition that allowed him to easily restate important material and develop motives while composing with musical forms with which the audience was familiar enough to have certain expectations.

Because repetition is expected in these forms, the listener notices immediately whenever any material is varied. Through recapitulations, each movement manifests Schoenberg's philosophy on coherence, making this work comprehensible to listeners despite its new tonal language.

IV. Comprehensibility in the Theme and Variations of Op. 29

Of the movements in Op. 29, I find the form of the third movement, the Theme and Variations, to be the best exemplification of Schoenberg's writings on comprehensibility. Both coherence through repetition and the employment of familiar musical language are prominent throughout the movement. These concepts are present in the theme itself, its manipulation in the variations, and the means of transitioning from the initial statement of the theme to its final iteration in Variation IV.

In his chapter on this form in his *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, Schoenberg writes: "A simple theme will consist of closely related motive-forms, in preference to distant ones. Structurally, the theme should show definite subdivision and clear phrasing. One usually finds binary or ternary forms."⁵⁹ This chapter focuses on the composition of theme and variations within a tonal idiom, but these rules are still adhered to in Op. 29; the theme moves mostly in step-wise motion, spans a limited range, has clear phrasing, and functions, standing alone, as a tonal melody.

The theme, shown in Example 3.2, is a twenty-measure period and consists of an antecedent and consequent, each ten bars long.⁶⁰ Already the theme promotes comprehensibility, as this balanced structure of the theme emulates qualities of the tonal music with which

⁵⁹ Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1970), 167.

⁶⁰ I have re-barred Example 3.2 for clarity of the theme's rhythmic regularity. The theme as it appears in the original score is contained in Appendix III.

audiences were most familiar. Additionally, the theme is written in tonal language; the notes of the theme are B, C#, D#, E, F#, G# and A, alluding to an E major sonority. To further this sonority, the antecedent hints at a half-cadence, ending with D# C# B in m.10, and the consequent ends on an implied double-neighbor authentic cadence, ending with F# D# E in mm.19-20.



Example 3.2: Tonal theme from Theme and Variations movement

The manipulation of this theme throughout the movement pays particular attention to coherence between variations, furthering its comprehensibility. In the first variation the theme is presented in the cello starting in m.23. The clarinets play in rhythmic unison together, as do the other strings, but the cello rhythm is unique, consistently two eighth notes followed by a quarter-rest, allowing it to stand out so the theme can be heard more clearly. The cello plays the entire antecedent before the theme is passed to the clarinet for the beginning of the consequent in m.43 and then back to the cello for the end of the consequent in m.53. When the theme is passed to the clarinet, the voice with the theme maintains the two eighths + quarter rest rhythm, but the E_b clarinet adopts this rhythm also, creating a rhythmic duet. When the theme returns to the cello,

the two eighths + quarter rest rhythm remains a duet, though now in the cello and the bass clarinet voices.

This variation promotes comprehensibility in several ways. First, by initially presenting the theme in an instrument with a rhythm unique from the others, Schoenberg is following his second law of comprehensibility by presenting the important voice somehow differently from the subsidiary voices.⁶¹ When the theme is no longer as obviously presented in the consequent, migrating more quickly between instruments, listeners are prepared for the change, as they have been easily following it rhythmically to that point. Schoenberg gradually demands more of the listener to follow the theme by stripping away the uniqueness of the rhythm presenting it. However, the theme is still comprehensible because even though the rhythm presenting the theme is no longer unique in the ensemble, the clarinet adopts the two-eighth + quarter rest rhythm previously played by the cello, allowing the listener to keep track of the theme. As the theme travels through the instruments in this variation, the rhythm of the voice presenting the theme never changes, thus making the presentation of the theme rhythmically coherent.

Additionally, this variation is highly coherent in regards to the original theme, since the changes between the initial presentation and this variation are few; as in the theme's first appearance, it is presented for long stretches of time in only one voice, and the phrasings are clear through changes in rhythm that correspond to the initial presentation of the theme. For example, in the theme, the B that ends the antecedent, five eighth notes in length, is longer than the notes preceding it, mostly dotted-quarter notes. In the first variation, the B ending the consequent is stretched, as that measure is in a 3/4 time signature, in contrast to the surrounding

⁶¹ This law in its original German refers to main and subordinate "Sachen," which can be translated as "matters" or "things." In the original context the laws following this one address main and subordinate thematic material and their relation to the tonal center of a piece. I understand "Sachen" here to be an encompassing term for all "things," not just thematic material, and thus apply the law to main and subordinate *voices*, not just *themes*.

measures' 2/4 time signature.

The second variation is a piano solo, with only the additional presence of the bass clarinet for color. In this movement, the piano has a chordal texture in the right hand and a bass line accompanied by a sixteenth-note pattern in the left hand. In each measure the left hand jumps from the bass register to the treble register in the middle of the sixteenth-note pattern, and the notes in the treble clef are the statement of the theme, in a consistent rhythm of a sixteenth note followed by a quarter note. This statement of the theme appears in alternation with the chordal texture of the right hand. The theme then moves to the highest voice of the right hand's chordal texture in m.70 and switches more rapidly between hands as the variation progresses from m.77 onward.

This variation, developing further out of the preceding variation, also caters to the laws of comprehensibility in numerous ways. Each time the voice presenting the theme changes, the rhythm in which it is presented changes accordingly, to allow the listener to hear clearly where the theme moved. For example, when the theme moves from the left hand to the right hand for the first time in m.70, the rhythm of the thematic material changes from the sixteenth + quarter-note pattern to long notes articulated on the downbeat. Whichever voice is presenting the thematic material consistently states the material in a rhythmically stable way so that the rhythms, through their repetition, remain coherent and the pitch content can be comprehensible. While this maintains comprehensibility, as the rhythm of the theme is always being clearly presented, it is more complicated than the previous variation, which maintained a consistent rhythm for the theme throughout the entire variation.

This variation is also where it becomes clear that the variations are ordered in a specific and comprehensible way. Because the manner in which the theme is presented is less evident in

this variation, it is clear that the listener must rely on its coherence with the preceding variation to understand where the theme is, and that the first variation was a necessary connector between the statement of the theme and Variation II. If it were not for the introduction of a nomadic presentation of the theme in an obvious way in Variation I, it would be difficult for the listener to hear and immediately understand the even more nomadic presentation of the theme in this second variation.

The third variation is a continuation of the second. The theme is stated clearly in the E \flat clarinet, each note of the theme articulated on a strong beat. What makes this variation a continuation of the previous variation is the quartet comprised of the clarinet, bass clarinet, viola, and cello. In this variation it becomes clear that the chordal texture in the right hand of the previous variation was not just for color or depth, but was subordinate material that later develops here. These four instruments supply a chordal texture in alternation with the theme in the E \flat clarinet that is identical to the chordal texture the right hand had in the previous movement. For example, in m.64, the harmony on the downbeat consists of an E \flat , G, B \flat , and F \sharp . The downbeat of m.65 contains A, C, E, and G \sharp . If one compares those harmonies to those in the quartet at mm.101–2 in the third variation, it is clear that the harmonies are identical.

The reiterations in this variation of both the theme and the subordinate chordal material from Variation II directly promote coherence. In this movement not only is the theme made comprehensible through repetition, but other material that was understood to this point as unimportant becomes important according to Schoenberg's first law of comprehensibility that deals with important material being stated multiple times. Here the movement transitions from being various restatements of a theme to a gradual development of different musical materials.

This variation further demonstrates the careful and deliberate ordering of variations. The

fact that it is a larger-scale restatement of Variation II, where the material from the piano solo is expanded into all of the winds and strings, while the piano in this variation adds yet more material, demonstrates that it must follow Variation II, and that if the order of these variations were reversed they would not be comprehensible: the addition of material as a movement progresses makes more comprehensible sense than a subtraction of material that would result if the movements were not in this specific order.

The fourth and final variation demands that the listener be intimately familiar with the theme at this point, because it is the most complicated and nomadic presentation of the theme. The theme is presented in fragments, jumping quickly from instrument to instrument, marked as *Hauptstimmen* in the score. At this point, the listener relies on the coherence of the previous movements to be comfortable with his or her knowledge of the theme and is, despite the complicated presentation, able to follow it as it travels around the ensemble.

This variation demonstrates the effectiveness of Schoenberg's philosophy of coherence and comprehensibility. If listeners were exposed to the initial statement of the theme followed by the fourth variation, they would be unable to follow the theme. But by constantly maintaining some similarity between each variation as the movement progressed, by the end the listener finds what is a complicated, nomadic, and challenging presentation of the theme perfectly comprehensible, following the tonal melody as it travels through a complex twelve-tone context. It demonstrates that that audiences, given the proper preparation, can listen to an ensemble performing dense twelve-tone material and follow a basic tonal melody through it.

This can be related back to the discussion of sets A, B, and C. The fourth variation, analogically set B, is the final material the listener is meant to eventually comprehend: densely composed twelve-tone content. The initial statement of the theme, analogically set A, is the

material with which the audience is already familiar: a basic tonal melodic period. The variations between the original theme and the final variation, analogically various C sets, are the points of coherence that lead the listeners through the movement, preparing them for the final variation so that when it is presented, it is comprehensible.

The movement finishes with a coda that presents fragmentations of the theme, bringing the movement to a comfortable end. The listener is by now familiar enough with the theme that these fragmentations are recognizable and one can hear how the movement dissolves in order to reach a restful conclusion.

* * *

While it is easy to imagine that twelve-tone composers like Schoenberg used traditional forms as templates for composition, filling them in with material from various row forms, it is important to explore other uses for these forms. Although Schoenberg's earliest twelve-tone works used these traditional forms as a means of presenting this new method of pitch organization, it is clear that they were not merely easy ways of organizing a piece, but rather were thoughtful choices for the presentation of a new musical language.

Schoenberg's writings clearly demonstrate that he gave the comprehensibility of his musical work significant attention and thought. It is no coincidence that his theoretical writings accentuate that if something new is presented in a work, other elements must not be new in order for those elements to be comprehensible. Op. 29 is only one instance where Schoenberg employed traditional formal construction in order to allow his new twelve-tone composition to be comprehensible. Despite the prominence of comprehensibility in Schoenberg's writings, very

little has been discussed relating his composition to those writings. I think it is clear, however, that analyzing Schoenberg's works with knowledge of this written philosophy provides insight into the music that would otherwise be lacking. For this reason, I think scholars should continue to revisit Schoenberg's music that has previously been analyzed, and view it through the lens of his theoretical writings, as we will gain an even clearer understanding of his music. Our comprehension was, after all, Schoenberg's primary goal.

APPENDIX I

A Timeline Of Thematic Material in *The Hours*

Time	Theme	Plot
2:00	Death Progression	Virginia's Suicide (Film intro)
3:45	Sleeping Theme	All three women shown sleeping as film begins
8:04	Waking Theme	Each woman wakes up and gets ready for the day
13:46	Bell Theme	Laura and Richie decide to make a cake
16:40	"Metamorphosis Two"	Clarissa talks to florist about how she is a character in Richard's novel
17:15	"Metamorphosis Two"	Virginia comes up with idea for <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
17:25	"Metamorphosis Two"	Laura reads her cookbook
21:25	Death Progression	Clarissa visits Richard, who doesn't want to go to the party
26:50	Bell Theme	Richard and Clarissa kiss before she leaves his apartment
27:30	Bell Theme	Virginia pens first sentence: "On this day, of all days, her fate becomes clear to her."
42:00	Bell Theme	After Kitty and Laura kiss, and they act as though nothing happened
45:50	Sleeping Theme	Virginia and Angelica discuss death at bird's funeral
48:50	Sleeping Theme	Transition from Virginia and the bird to Laura lying in bed
1:02:30	Sleeping Theme	Laura drives away toward hotel as Richie watches
1:03:10	Waking Theme	Laura drives to the hotel, where she decides not to go through with her planned suicide
1:09:36	Bell Theme	After Virginia kisses Vanessa
1:27:40	Death Progression	Cuts between adult Richard and young Richie as Richard reflects on the day Laura decided to abandon him
1:32:00	"Metamorphosis Two"	Richard's suicide
1:37:12	Death Progression	Laura and Virginia's husbands call them to bed; 2001 Laura meets Clarissa

APPENDIX II

Formal diagrams of each movement of Op. 29

Overture:

Measure:	1	3	29	50	68	90	109	131	141	162	202	221
Formal section:	Introduction	A			B			A'			B'	Coda
Subsection:		a	b	a'	c	d	c'	a''	b'	a'''	c''	
Row in use (melody):		P ₃	I ₄	I ₁₁	R ₂	P ₂	R ₅	I ₀	P ₁	P ₆	P ₁	
Hexachord group:		4	3	1	1	2	4	3	3	2	3	
Tetrachord group:		7	3	6	1	12	7	4	5	8	5	

Tanzschritte:

Measure:	1	6	15	48	72	85	99	114	178	182	203
Formal section:	Introduction	A		B		A'			B'		Coda
Subsection:		a	b	c	d	e	a'	b'	c'	d'	
Row in use (melody):		P ₃	P ₃	RI ₁₀	I ₁₀	I ₈	I ₁₀	P ₅	R ₃	I ₁₀	
Hexachord group:		4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	
Tetrachord group:		7	7	4	7	5	7	4	5	7	

Theme and Variations:

Measure:	1	23	64	101	124	147
Formal section:	Theme	Var. 1	Var. 2	Var. 3	Var. 4	Coda
Presentation of Theme:	Initial presentation, bass clarinet	Antecedent in parts of repeated eighth note figure in cello. Consequent begins in clarinet, finishes in cello, similarly presented within eighth note figure.	Begins in left hand of piano solo, migrates to right hand chords. Theme alternates between left hand sixteenth note figure and right hand chordal texture throughout variation	Fuller texture enhancement of Var. 2. Theme in Eb clarinet while other instruments emulate the remaining texture from Var. 2.	Theme migrates rapidly between instruments; does not remain in any given instrument for extended time.	Middle voice of a three-part piano texture before breaking off into other instruments, switching rapidly.

Gigue:

Measure:	1	17	30	47	64	80	96		107	131
Formal section:	A				B				Coda	
Subsection:	a	b	a'	b'	c	d	<i>Tanzschritte</i> material		T/V material	a''
Row in use (melody):	P ₃	RI ₁₁	I ₆	I ₆	I ₃	RI ₉	RI ₄		N/A	I ₅
Hexachord group:	4	2	4	4	1	1	4			2
Tetrachord group:	7	8	10	10	2	6	10			11

APPENDIX III

Theme of the Theme and Variations as it Appears in the Published Score

The musical score is presented in three systems, each containing five measures. The instruments are Kl. KI (Klarinetten), (oder Flöte) (Flöten), KI (Klarinetten), and Bs. KI (Bassklarinette) (oder Fagott) (Fagott). The time signature is 3/4. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score begins with a *p dolce* marking. Measures 1-4 show the initial theme. Measures 5-9 continue the theme. Measures 10-14 show a variation with a *p* marking. Measures 15-19 continue the variation. Measures 20-25 show a final variation with a *pp* marking and a change to a 2/4 time signature starting at measure 23.

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