

schenkerian analysis

Unlocking the Secrets of Music: A Comprehensive Guide to Schenkerian Analysis

Introduction:

Have you ever listened to a piece of music and felt a deep, underlying structure, a sense of inevitability guiding the melody and harmony? This intuitive understanding of musical progression often points to the powerful analytical framework of Schenkerian analysis. Far from a dry academic exercise, Schenkerian analysis unlocks profound insights into the compositional process, revealing the hidden architecture that shapes even the most seemingly complex musical works. This comprehensive guide will equip you with the tools to understand and apply Schenkerian analysis, allowing you to delve deeper into the music you love and appreciate its underlying genius. We'll cover the fundamental concepts, practical application, and common misconceptions, leaving you with a firm grasp of this invaluable analytical technique.

I. Understanding the Fundamentals of Schenkerian Analysis:

Schenkerian analysis, named after Heinrich Schenker, is a powerful method of musical analysis that focuses on revealing the underlying structural layers of a composition. Unlike other analytical approaches that might concentrate on surface details like counterpoint or harmony, Schenkerian analysis aims to uncover the *Ursatz*, the fundamental "root" structure of a piece. This *Ursatz* is a three-note chord progression (tonic, dominant, tonic) that Schenker believed served as the generative principle of virtually all tonal music. Imagine it as the skeletal framework upon which the composer builds the entire musical edifice.

The analysis involves reducing the complexity of a piece through several levels of reduction, peeling away the surface details to reveal progressively deeper layers of structure. These levels are typically represented graphically, using a system of notation that shows the hierarchical relationships between pitches and chords. This systematic reduction allows us to see how the composer's choices create tension and release, leading the listener towards a satisfying resolution.

II. Key Concepts in Schenkerian Analysis: The Urlinie and Prolongation:

Two central concepts underpin Schenkerian analysis: the *Urlinie* and prolongation.

The Urlinie (Fundamental Line): This is the descending stepwise bass line that forms the backbone of the *Ursatz*. It typically begins on the tonic and descends through a series of steps to the final tonic. It's the most fundamental melodic contour, providing the structural framework for the entire piece. Understanding the

Urlinie is crucial to grasping the overall shape and direction of the music.

Prolongation: This refers to the various ways in which the composer elaborates and extends the Urlinie and other structural elements. Prolongation involves techniques like arpeggiation, neighbor tones, passing tones, and other embellishments that decorate the fundamental structure without altering its underlying shape. By identifying prolongations, we understand how the surface details are functionally related to the underlying structure.

III. Levels of Reduction in Schenkerian Analysis:

Schenkerian analysis typically involves several levels of reduction, starting with a detailed representation of the score and progressing to increasingly simplified representations. The number of layers depends on the complexity of the piece, but common levels include:

Level 1 (Foreground): This is the most detailed level, showing the actual notes and chords of the composition.

Level 2 (Middleground): This level begins to abstract the music, focusing on larger structural components like phrases and cadences. Prolongations begin to be clarified, showing how surface details relate to deeper structures.

Level 3 (Background): This level reveals the Urlinie and the fundamental structure of the piece (the *Ursatz*). It represents the bare bones of the composition, showing the most fundamental melodic and harmonic progression.

IV. Applying Schenkerian Analysis: A Step-by-Step Approach:

Analyzing a piece using Schenkerian methods requires a systematic approach. Begin by carefully examining the score, identifying the tonic and dominant chords. Then, trace the melodic lines, focusing on the bass line. Identify the most prominent melodic contour and try to discern the Urlinie. Gradually reduce the complexity of the score, simplifying rhythmic and harmonic details, focusing on the underlying melodic progression and harmonic relationships. Create graphical representations, using Schenkerian notation, to illustrate the different levels of reduction and the relationships between them. Remember that Schenkerian analysis is an iterative process; refining your understanding often requires multiple revisions.

V. Common Misconceptions about Schenkerian Analysis:

It's only for Classical music: While Schenker's work primarily focused on Classical and Romantic music, his principles can be applied to various styles, albeit with adaptations.

It's too complicated: While it requires dedicated study, the fundamental principles are accessible, and the rewards in understanding musical structure are substantial.

It provides a single "correct" analysis: Different analysts might arrive at slightly different interpretations, reflecting the inherent ambiguity of musical expression. The strength of Schenkerian analysis lies in its framework for revealing underlying relationships, not dictating a singular truth.

VI. A Sample Schenkerian Analysis Outline:

Let's analyze a simple phrase from a Mozart sonata. This example will demonstrate a basic application of the principles described above.

Title: Schenkerian Analysis of a Mozart Sonata Phrase

Outline:

Introduction: Briefly introduce the chosen phrase and its context within the larger work.

Level 1 (Foreground): Present the detailed musical notation of the phrase.

Level 2 (Middleground): Reduce the complexity, highlighting the main melodic lines and harmonic progressions. Identify prolongations.

Level 3 (Background): Reveal the Ursatz, identifying the Urlinie and the fundamental harmonic progression.

Conclusion: Summarize the analysis, highlighting the key structural elements and their relationship to the overall aesthetic impact.

(Article explaining each point of the outline would follow here. Due to the length constraints of this response, I cannot provide the full article explaining each point. This would involve a detailed musical example with graphical representations of Schenkerian reductions. This would be a multi-page, illustrated analysis.)

VII. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. Is Schenkerian analysis relevant to contemporary music? While primarily developed for tonal music, its principles can be adapted and applied to atonal and other musical styles to explore underlying structures.
1. How long does it take to master Schenkerian analysis? Like any analytical skill, mastery requires dedicated study and practice. Years of consistent engagement are typically needed to develop a deep understanding.
1. What are some good resources to learn more? Numerous books and scholarly articles on Schenkerian analysis are available, as well as online courses and tutorials.

1. Can I use Schenkerian analysis for composing? Absolutely! Understanding the underlying structural principles can greatly inform your compositional decisions.

1. Is Schenkerian analysis subjective? To a degree, yes. However, the analytical framework provides a structure for evaluating the underlying relationships within the music.

1. How does Schenkerian analysis relate to other analytical methods? It complements other approaches, offering a unique perspective on structural depth and the generative processes of composition.

1. What software can help with Schenkerian analysis? While no dedicated software exists, music notation software like Sibelius or Finale can be used to create graphical representations of the analysis.

1. Is Schenkerian analysis only for trained musicians? While musical training is beneficial, the fundamental principles are understandable to anyone with an interest in music theory and a willingness to learn.

1. Why is Schenkerian analysis important? It reveals the deep structural relationships within music, offering insights into the composer's intentions and the aesthetic impact of the piece.

VIII. Related Articles:

1. The Ursatz and its Variations: Exploring the different forms and interpretations of the fundamental structure.

2. Prolongational Techniques in Schenkerian Analysis: A deeper dive into the methods composers use to elaborate the underlying structure.
3. Schenkerian Analysis and Atonal Music: Examining the adaptability of Schenkerian principles to atonal and other non-tonal compositions.
4. Applying Schenkerian Analysis to Jazz Music: Exploring the application of Schenkerian concepts to improvisational music.
5. The Role of the Middleground in Schenkerian Analysis: Focusing on the significance of this intermediate level of reduction.
6. Comparing Schenkerian Analysis to Other Analytical Methods: A comparative study of different analytical approaches.
7. Schenkerian Analysis and Form: Exploring the relationship between Schenkerian analysis and formal structures in music.
8. Schenkerian Analysis: A Practical Guide for Beginners: A step-by-step guide to learning the basics of Schenkerian analysis.
9. Heinrich Schenker's Life and Legacy: An exploration of the life and work of the man behind the analytical method.

This comprehensive guide provides a solid foundation for understanding and applying Schenkerian analysis. Remember that consistent study and practice are key to mastering this powerful analytical tool, unlocking deeper insights into the musical works you love.

schenkerian analysis: A Guide to Schenkerian Analysis David Neumeyer, Susan Tepping, 1992 This step-by-step introduction to interpreting bass lines, upper parts, and whole compositions uses the new multi-level hierarchy to show readers the interaction of structure and motion in music. The authors present scores of models for notation and offer a host of exercises which are keyed to chapters or sections of chapters. In addition, lists of optional exercises keyed to commonly used anthologies are also supplied. Content highlights: presents bass-line sketches to allow a smooth transition into Schenkerian analysis; details the link between Schenkerian analysis and traditional methods of analysis of form in music; Uses a generative (top-down) approach to Schenkerian analysis rather than a reductive approach to more clearly illustrate Schenker's original intentions for the method; devotes an entire section to the special topic of nontraditional tonal music before Bach and after Brahms; and offers an encapsulated overview of the principal concepts of Schenker's method to facilitate recall.

schenkerian analysis: SchenkerGUIDE Thomas Pankhurst, 2008-05-07 Derived from the

widely used website, www.SchenkerGUIDE.com, this book offers a step-by-step method to tackling Schenkerian analysis. It outlines the concepts involved in analysis, provides a detailed working method to help students to get started on the process of analysis, and explores the basics of a Schenkerian approach to form, register, motives and dramatic structure. It also provides a series of exercises with hints and tips for their completion.

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schenkerian analysis: Schenkerian Analysis David Beach, 2019-03-06 *Schenkerian Analysis: Perspectives on Phrase Rhythm, Motive and Form, Second Edition* is a textbook directed at all those—whether beginners or more advanced students—interested in gaining understanding of and facility at applying Schenker's ideas on musical structure. It begins with an overview of Schenker's approach to music, and then progresses systematically from the phrase and its various combinations to longer and more complex works. Unlike other texts on this subject, *Schenkerian Analysis* combines the study of multi-level pitch organization with that of phrase rhythm (the interaction of phrase and hypermeter), motivic repetition at different structural levels, and form. It also contains analytic graphs of several extended movements, separate works, and songs. A separate instructor's manual provides additional advice and solutions (graphs) of all recommended assignments. This second edition has been revised to make the early chapters more accessible and to improve the pedagogical effectiveness of the book as a whole. Changes in musical examples have been carefully made to ensure that each example fully supports student learning. Informed by decades of teaching experience, this book provides a clear and comprehensive guide to Schenker's theories and their applications.

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schenkerian analysis: *Unfoldings* Carl Schachter, 1998-12-31 Carl Schachter is, by common consent, one of the three or four most important music theorists currently at work in North America. He is the preeminent practitioner in the world of the Schenkerian approach to the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which focuses on the linear organization of music and now dominates discussions of the standard repertoire in university courses and in professional journals. His articles have appeared in a variety of journals, including some that are obscure or hard to obtain. This volume gathers some of his finest essays, including those on rhythm in tonal music, Schenkerian theory, and text setting, as well as a pair of analytical monographs, on Bach's Fugue in B-flat major from Volume 1 of the Well-Tempered Clavier and Chopin's Fantasy, Op. 49.

schenkerian analysis: Explorations in Schenkerian Analysis David Beach, Su Yin Susanna Mak, 2016 Displays the range and diversity of Schenkerian studies today in fifteen essays covering music from Bach through Debussy and Strauss.

schenkerian analysis: *The Art of Tonal Analysis* Carl Schachter, 2015-12-02 Carl Schachter is the world's leading practitioner of Schenkerian theory and analysis. His articles and books have been broadly influential, and are seen by many as models of musical insight and lucid prose. Yet, perhaps his greatest impact has been felt in the classroom. At the Mannes College of Music, the Juilliard School of Music, Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and at special pedagogical events around the world, he has taught generations of musical

performers, composers, historians, and theorists over the course of his long career. In Fall 2012, Schachter taught a doctoral seminar at the CUNY Graduate Center in which he talked about the music and the musical issues that have concerned him most deeply; the course was in essence a summation of his extensive and renowned teaching. In *The Art of Tonal Analysis*, music theorist Joseph Straus presents edited transcripts of those lectures. Accompanied by abundant music examples, including analytical examples transcribed from the classroom blackboard, Straus's own visualizations of material that Schachter presented aurally at the piano, and Schachter's own extended Schenkerian graphs and sketches, this book offers a vivid account of Schachter's masterful pedagogy and his deep insight into the central works of the tonal canon. In making the lectures of one of the world's most extraordinary musicians and musical thinkers available to a wide audience, *The Art of Tonal Analysis* is an invaluable resource for students and scholars of music.

schenkerian analysis: *Schenker Studies* Hedi Siegel, 1990-02-23 The essays contained in this volume provide a focus on the work of the music theorist Heinrich Schenker - a figure of legendary status who has had an incalculable influence on developments in music theory and analysis in this century. His theories, not always fully understood, have aroused some controversy. The broad spectrum of essays presented here will help clarify Schenker's ideas and their application and will also serve as a useful introduction to his work for music theorists. The essays, written by fourteen leading theorists, originate in papers delivered at the Schenker Symposium held at The Mannes College of Music, New York in 1985.

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Department of Music Queens College and Graduate School Carl Schachter Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, City University of New York, 1998-12-04 Carl Schachter is, by common consent, one of the three or four most important music theorists currently at work in North America. He is the preeminent practitioner in the world of the Schenkerian approach to the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which focuses on the linear organization of music and now dominates discussions of the standard repertoire in university courses and in professional journals. His articles have appeared in a variety of journals, including some that are obscure or hard to obtain. This volume gathers some of his finest essays, including those on rhythm in tonal music, Schenkerian theory, and text setting, as well as a pair of analytical monographs, on Bach's Fugue in B-flat major from Volume 1 of the Well-Tempered Clavier and Chopin's Fantasy, Op. 49.

schenkerian analysis: Analysis of Tonal Music Gagne Cadwallader, Allen Clayton

Cadwallader, Associate Professor of Music Theory Associate Professor of Music Theory and the Music Theory Coordinator David Gagné, David Gagne, David Gagné, Professor of Music Theory Allen Cadwallader, 1998 Designed as an introductory text for upper-level undergraduates and beginning graduate students, *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach* explains the fundamental principles of Schenkerian analysis by focusing on the music itself. Intended for use in one- or two-semester courses on Schenkerian theory, this text will also appeal to individuals interested in Schenker's work. The book assumes no prior knowledge of the subject, but it does require a background in harmony and voice leading; a familiarity with species counterpoint is also desirable. The authors develop Schenkerian techniques through the practical analysis of specific compositions, an approach that parallels the evolution of Schenker's work. The book explains structural principles in actual composition rather than through models and formulas, and teaches students how to think about and critically examine compositions in ways that will inform their understanding and performance of great compositions of Western art music. The first part of the volume provides the foundation for the analysis of complete pieces and includes chapters on melody, bass-line structures, linear techniques, and the essential properties of the Ursatz and its basic elaborations; the presentation of complete compositions in Part II is organized by formal category. The concluding chapter summarizes the main theoretical issues of Schenker's approach. The book includes over 200 analytical graphs, musical examples, and a bibliography. *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach* provides a unique and accessible introduction to Schenkerian analytical ideas and shows how they can be applied toward a better understanding of tonal music.

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have provided a rich and powerful means of understanding the complexities of great masterworks of the Western tradition. Schenker's method is based on two cardinal concepts—a hierarchy of tones grouped into structural levels, and a recognition of the importance of strict voice-leading at all structural levels. In *Analyzing Fugue—A Schenkerian Approach*, author William Renwick utilizes Schenkerian techniques to explore the relationship between imitative counterpoint and voice-leading in fugue. He shows that the art of fugal composition as practiced by masters such as Bach and Handel involves a remarkable degree of systematic structural patterning that is not evident on the surface of the music. Reviews—...Renwick's book offers a penetrating theory of fugue, with telling observations for theorists and composers alike. Heather Platt Notes Sept. 1996...clearly the fruit of deep study and sophisticated knowledge of fugues (particularly those of Bach) and the literature about them. ...many will find it a fount of wisdom and knowledge. Lionel Pike, *Music and Letters* vol. 77 no. 1...consummate and meticulous scholarship. Robert Gauldin, *Intégral* vol. 9

schenkerian analysis: Structural Hearing Felix Salzer, Professor Felix Salzer, 1962-01-01 Written by a pupil of Heinrich Schenker, this outstanding work develops and extends Schenker's approach. More than 500 examples of music from the Middle Ages to the 20th century complement the detailed discussions and analyses.

schenkerian analysis: Becoming Heinrich Schenker Robert P. Morgan, 2014-07-24 Much controversy surrounds Schenker's mature theory and its attempt to explain musical pitch motion. *Becoming Heinrich Schenker* brings a new perspective to Schenker's theoretical work, showing that ideas characteristic of his mature theory, although in many respects fundamentally different, developed logically out of his earlier ideas. Robert P. Morgan provides an introduction to Schenker's mature theory and traces its development through all of his major publications, considering each in detail and with numerous music examples. Morgan also explores the relationship between Schenker's theory and his troubled ideology, which crucially influenced the evolution of his ideas and was heavily dependent upon both the empirical and idealist strains of contemporary German philosophical thought. Relying where possible on quotations from Schenker's own words, this book offers a balanced approach to his theory and a unique overview of this central music figure, generally considered to be the most prominent music theorist of the twentieth century.

schenkerian analysis: Student Workbook to Accompany Analysis of Tonal Music Allen Cadwallader, David Gagne, 2019-07-15 Guiding students systematically through the process of analysis, this extensively revised Student Workbook complements the fourth edition of *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach*. It presents works from a variety of instrumental settings, including four complete vocal works and excerpts from string quartets, symphonic movements, opera, chamber works, orchestral suites, sonatas and concertos, and solo piano works. Two-section chapters in Part 1 provide students with more guidance than the previous edition: Preliminaries offer a review of foundational Schenkerian terms and concepts—along with short excerpts and targeted practice exercises—while slightly lengthier excerpts for Analysis include guided tips. In Part 2, Analytical Applications (chapters 7-11), the scale of the excerpts gradually increases. Chapter 7 offers small-scale Ursatz patterns (8-20 bars); chapters 8 and 9 reinforce complete one- and two-part forms; and the final two chapters conclude with the study of ternary form and sonata process. This Student Workbook is available for separate purchase (978-0-19-0846688) or in money-saving bundles with the text. Please contact your Oxford University Press sales representative or call 800.280.0280 for details.

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musical structural analysis: a J. S. Bach chorale and prelude, a section of a Haydn sonata, and two Chopin études.

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schenkerian analysis: *Schenkerian Analysis - Analyse nach Heinrich Schenker* Oliver Schwab-Felisch, Michael Polth, Hartmut Fladt, 2021 Dass Heinrich Schenker zu einem der meistdiskutierten Musiktheoretiker des 20. Jahrhunderts wurde, hat im Wesentlichen zwei Gründe: Erstens ermöglicht seine Theorie ebenso vielschichtige wie konsistente Beschreibungen der Stimmführung, Harmonik und Syntax tonaler Werke. Und zweitens fand Schenkers 'Schichtenlehre' in den USA, wohin die meisten Schüler Schenkers nach 1933 emigriert waren, ideale Bedingungen vor - Bedingungen, die sie rasch zur führenden Theorie tonaler Musik aufsteigen ließen. In Österreich, Deutschland und der Schweiz nahm die Schenker-Rezeption vorerst einen anderen Weg: Bis zur Jahrtausendwende blieb Schenkers Theorie Sache weniger Spezialisten. Seither aber stößt sie auch im deutschsprachigen Raum auf wachsendes Interesse. Der vorliegende deutsch-englische Sammelband trägt zur Schenker-Forschung beider Sprachräume und Wissenschaftskulturen bei. Er untersucht theoriegeschichtliche Fragen, beleuchtet unerforschte Aspekte der Schenker-Theorie und erschließt zahlreiche ihrer wissenschaftstheoretischen, rezeptionshistorischen und musikästhetischen Implikationen. Häufig geht er dabei über Schenker hinaus - durch neue Vorstellungen von Rhythmik und Metrik, Bezüge zur Systemtheorie Niklas Luhmanns oder pluralistische Theoriekonzepte. Der separate Notenband enthält analytische Graphiken ebenso wie originale Notentexte. Online abrufbare Hörbeispiele verdeutlichen, wie sich unterschiedliche analytische Interpretationen auf musikalische Aufführungen auswirken können. Glossar und Register schließlich erleichtern vertiefte Lektüren entlang gezielter Fragestellungen. Ein grundlegendes Studienbuch, das Musiktheoretiker:innen wie Interpret:innen zahlreiche Möglichkeiten aufzeigt, sich von Schenkers Denken anregen zu lassen.

schenkerian analysis: *Heinrich Schenker and Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata* Nicholas Marston, 2013 In 1912 Heinrich Schenker contracted with the publisher Universal Edition to provide an 'elucidatory edition' (Erläuterungsausgabe) of Beethoven's last five piano sonatas. But that of the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata, op. 106, was never published. As Nicholas Marston shows in a detailed history of the Erläuterungsausgabe, despite Schenker's failure to complete the project, he nevertheless developed a voice-leading analysis of the sonata during the years 1924-1926. Marston's book provides the first in-depth study of this rich analysis, which is reproduced in full in high-quality digital images.

schenkerian analysis: *Free Composition* Heinrich Schenker, 2001 The first two volumes of Heinrich Schenker's masterwork *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*, *Harmonielehren* (1906), and *Kontrapunkt* (1910 and 1922), laid the foundations for the harmonic aspect of his theory. The specific voice-leading component was a later development, progressing with brilliance over the last 15 years of his life. It is in *Free Composition* (*Freie Satz*, 1935) that the idea of voice-leading receives its most detailed and precise formulation. Pendragon Press is honored to make this distinguished reprint available once again, with a new preface by Carl Schachter.

schenkerian analysis: *Music Theory, Analysis, and Society* Robert P. Morgan, 2017-07-05

Robert P. Morgan is one of a small number of music theorists writing in English who treat music theory, and in particular Schenkerian theory, as part of general intellectual life. Morgan's writings are renowned within the field of music scholarship: he is the author of the well-known Norton volume *Twentieth-Century Music*, and of additional books relating to Schenkerian and other theory, analysis and society. This volume of Morgan's previously published essays encompasses a broad range of issues, including historical and social issues and is of importance to anyone concerned with modern Western music. His specially written introduction treats his writings as a whole but also provides additional material relating to the articles included in this volume.

schenkerian analysis: *Essays from the Third International Schenker Symposium* Allen

Clayton Cadwallader, Jan Miyake, 2006 The arguments presented in the published papers are of a high calibre, and the written style is clear and persuasive; and this applies to the essays by non-native-English-scholars, which account for a third of Schenker 3. (*Music and Letters*, vol. 89, no. 3) During March of 1999, the Third International Schenker Symposium took place at Mannes College of Music in New York City. This was the third in a series of conferences devoted exclusively to the work of Heinrich Schenker, the most influential music analyst and theorist of the 20th century. This volume contains studies, originally presented at the 1999 symposium, that focus on topics such as the retained tone, non-tonic openings and the auxiliary cadence; other essays use Schenker's analytical approach to explore the tonal structure of opera and the compositional language of Beethoven, Corelli, Mozart and Stravinsky. This volume gives testimony to the scope of Schenkerian research and represents the exploration of Schenker's ideas by American and European scholars at the turn of the 21st century.

schenkerian analysis: *Computational Music Analysis* David Meredith, 2015-10-27 This book

provides an in-depth introduction and overview of current research in computational music analysis. Its seventeen chapters, written by leading researchers, collectively represent the diversity as well as the technical and philosophical sophistication of the work being done today in this intensely interdisciplinary field. A broad range of approaches are presented, employing techniques originating in disciplines such as linguistics, information theory, information retrieval, pattern recognition, machine learning, topology, algebra and signal processing. Many of the methods described draw on well-established theories in music theory and analysis, such as Forte's pitch-class set theory, Schenkerian analysis, the methods of semiotic analysis developed by Ruwet and Nattiez, and Lerdahl and Jackendoff's *Generative Theory of Tonal Music*. The book is divided into six parts, covering methodological issues, harmonic and pitch-class set analysis, form and voice-separation, grammars and hierarchical reduction, motivic analysis and pattern discovery and, finally, classification and the discovery of distinctive patterns. As a detailed and up-to-date picture of current research in computational music analysis, the book provides an invaluable resource for researchers, teachers and students in music theory and analysis, computer science, music information retrieval and related disciplines. It also provides a state-of-the-art reference for practitioners in the music technology industry.

schenkerian analysis: *ISMIR 2008* Juan Pablo Bello, Elaine Chew, Douglas Turnbull, 2008

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