

BACKGROUND STRUCTURES AND NARRATIVE IN MUSIC BY WOMEN

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the use of modified Schenkerian analysis and how it relates to a feminine narrative in a piece of music. In music theory literature about music by women, Schenkerian analysis is a tool that is often ignored; some scholars claim that the goal-oriented nature of Schenkerian analysis prevents it from being an effective tool to analyze music that doesn't adhere to traditional tonal models, including modern works by women composers. In this study, it was found that modifying the *Urlinie* and *Bassbrechung* to reflect salience rather than a traditional harmonic structure allowed for the tool to actually reveal a lot about the underlying narratives in the music. The case studies include *Genesis II* (Janika Vandervelde), *Missa Gaia*; *Mass for the Earth* (Libby Larsen), and "Music Box" (Cynthia Folio).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	9
II.	TWO HEARTBEATS IN <i>GENESIS II</i>	14
	Methodology and Analysis	19
	The Post-Minimalist Idiom and Background Reductions.....	27
	Key Signature Transitions, the Background, and the Narrative	29
	Concluding Thoughts.....	37
III.	CYCLES AND DIRECTION IN <i>MISSA GAIA</i>	39
	Introduction and Background	39
	Why a Mass.....	40
	Analysis.....	41
	Concluding Thoughts.....	58
IV.	TIME, PERSPECTIVE, AND METAMORPHOSIS IN “MUSIC BOX”	59
	Conception and Introduction.....	59
	Musical Form	61
	Schenkerian Analysis of “Music Box”	66
	Concluding Thoughts.....	71
V.	SUMMING IT ALL UP.....	70
VI.	REFERENCES CITED.....	72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1. annotated graph of <i>Genesis II</i> (Vandervelde)	19
1.2. graph of <i>Genesis II</i> (Vandervelde).....	22
2.1. graph of “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> (Larsen)	42
2.2. circle of fifths diagram for “Introit,” mm. 2-6 (Larsen)	43
2.3. graph of “Introit” (Larsen).....	46
2.4. middleground graph of “Introit,” mm. 55-60.....	52
2.5. circle of fifths diagram for “Introit,” mm. 76-80.....	54
3.1. form chart for “Music Box” (Folio).....	61
3.2. graph for “Music Box (Folio)	67

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example	Page
1.1. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 1-16	17
1.2. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 324-328	21
1.3. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 48-52	21
1.4. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 305-309	24
1.5. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 322-328	25
1.6. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 431-436	26
1.7. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 437-451	27
1.8. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 184-187	29
1.9. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 1-16	30
1.10. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 37-42	31
1.11. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 43-47	32
1.12. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 201-204	33
1.13. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 211-225	34
1.14. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 431-432	35
1.15. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 433-436	36
1.16. Vandervelde, <i>Genesis II</i> , mm. 437-441	37
2.1. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 1-4.....	45
2.2. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 22-31	48
2.3. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 32-38.....	49
2.4. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 55-64.....	51

Example	Page
2.5. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 64-67	52
2.6. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 74-79	53
2.7. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 86-90	55
2.8. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 95-99	56
2.9. Larsen, “Introit,” <i>Missa Gaia</i> , mm. 104-108	57
3.1. Folio, “Music Box,” mm. 4-5	60
3.2. Folio, “Music Box,” mm. 37-41, 70-72	63
3.3. Folio, “Music Box,” mm. 92-98	65
3.4. Folio, “Music Box,” mm. 127-129	66
3.5. Folio, “Music Box,” mm. 6-9	68
3.6. Folio, “Music Box,” mm. 4-5, 42-44	70

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of music by women has developed extensively over the last thirty years, leading to new discoveries about the influence of gender in western history as well as examinations of the relationships between gender and art to this day. In the field of music theory, it has led several authors to focus on how the gender of a composer might inform an analysis of the piece.

One of the first articles to address the lack of analytical work on the music of women composers is Susan McClary's 1987 article, "Getting Down Off the Beanstalk."¹ In her analysis of Janika Vandervelde's *Genesis II*, McClary emphasizes the relationship between form and texture of the piece and the audience's perception of the piece; she then relates the audience's experience of the piece to the piece's storyline. By focusing on these perceptive elements and then moving on to traditional analytical techniques, McClary set a precedent for the analysis of literature by woman composers.

Since then, analysts have developed poignant habits for describing their methodology for analyzing music by women composers. For example, in her 1993 analysis of Libby Larsen's "Songs from Letters,"² Rosemary N. Killam delineates her method for analyzing music by living women composers. In addition, Killam makes the

¹ McClary, Susan, "Getting Down Off the Beanstalk," *Minnesota's Composers Forum*, February 1987.

² Killam, Rosemary N., "Women Working: An Alternative to Gans," *Perspectives in New Music*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Summer 1993. Killam's three central concepts of feminine analysis reflect a high level of personal engagement between the analyst and the piece: analysis should relate to current research and should include women's experience; analysis of music by a living composer should be done with the composer's permission; and the author must admit his or her own personal, perceived experience from listening to the piece.

claim that there is no set feminist analytical method, but rather confirms that the analyst must clearly delineate his or her method when taking a feminist approach.³

In reviewing the literature about gender in the music canon, there is a common idea that keeps coming back: use a “bottom-up” approach to analyze music by women composers. This approach has a few essential components: get to know the composer’s story; figure out what harmonic language she’s using, and don’t always assume that it’s common practice; adapt the analytical tool to learn more about how the composition of the piece helps tell the story.

Metaphors, narratives, and the composer’s experience also play a role in analyses of music by women composers. In April of 2016, *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers*⁴, edited by Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft, was published; this volume highlights concert masterworks by living women composers by providing nine analyses of major concert works by women composers active from 1960 to the present. The volume is marked by a wide spectrum of eclectic approaches that different authors have taken when analyzing the music, demonstrating that analysis of feminine music does not have a “one size fits all” approach. That brings us to an important characteristic of such analyses, which constitutes a challenge: femininity assumes individuality, so therefore analyses of feminine music are, according to Parsons and Ravenscroft in their introduction, “as unique as the women who wrote the music.”⁵

³ In her analysis, Killiam traces chant melodies through Larsen’s fourth song in the set. The set of songs tells the story about strong women in the untamed western United States who were often overlooked or ridiculed. Calamity Jane, the subject of the song studied, has a saint-like heart with a notably unholy reputation. Killiam argues that the chants in her melodies suggest that, at heart, she is more virtuous than sinful.

⁴ Parsons, Laurel, and Ravenscroft, Brenda, *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music 1961-2000*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

⁵ Parsons and Ravenscroft, 12.

In their introduction, Parsons and Ravenscroft also discuss the state of the scholarship of music by women in music academia. According to Parsons and Ravenscroft, “since 1994, only 23, or 1.51%, of the 1,524 articles published by eight peer-reviewed music theory and analysis journals over 376 issues have been devoted to music by a female composer.”⁶ They list several reasons for this abysmal statistic, including the ratio of women to male composers in the musical canon, which is low due to omission of women’s music from cultures that ignore it and from women’s historical inability to access higher education. Whatever the reason, the current status of analytical work of music by women is, according to Parsons and Ravenscroft, in a “nascent state.”⁷

Like McClary, Killam, and the authors in Parsons and Ravenscroft, scholars who study music by women have a variety of traditional analytical tools, including formal, quoting melodies from other sources, and studying performance practices to explore the rich stories that women composers are telling through their music. One foundational tool that analysts tend to avoid, however, is Schenkerian analysis. The essays in Parsons and Ravenscroft are divided into three sections based on the type of analysis used⁸; while the analytical methods reflect the diversity and musical richness of each of the pieces, however, they don’t advantage of this traditional tool.

In the case of *Genesis II*, I have found that McClary’s evasion of Schenkerian analysis actually prevents her argument from being all that it could be. By this, I mean that a Schenkerian-style background structure, which takes into account salience and the release of tension in surface-level details, can actually be a useful way to analyze the

⁶ Parsons and Ravenscroft, 3.

⁷ Parsons and Ravenscroft, 5.

⁸ The three sections are pitch organization in serial or octatonic works; gestural and cross-cultural theory to gain insight into the musical narrative; and text-music relations.

metaphors inherent in *Genesis II*, as well as other pieces by women. A background sketch can actually help sustain the narrative in the music, especially if we modify our Schenkerian tools appropriately to show how the background structures of certain pieces based on feminine themes actually reinforce those themes.

My Analyses:

In my analyses, I won't focus as much on biography and context, but I want to emphasize the femininity and emotions in the themes that inspired the music. What my thesis explores is the use of Schenkerian analysis, with appropriate modifications, to highlight these themes.

The three pieces I analyze are substantial works by women composers: Janika Vandervelde's *Genesis II*, and the "Introit" movement from Libby Larson's *Missa Gaia*. Cynthia Folio's "Music Box" is the last piece I will analyze. *Genesis II* and *Missa Gaia* have already been examined in published analyses, but "Music Box" has not; I will be looking for ways which reductive analysis enhances preexisting analyses and enables me to provide my own insights for all of these works.

While the three pieces in this study are essentially tonal, they all, in their own ways, deviate from the common practices typically used in tonal music. *Genesis II* is mostly in E Lydian or E-flat Aeolian, but the surface-level motivic development obscures the key center; the piece's strong post-minimalist aesthetic further obscures the key by juxtaposing two groups of instruments. The piano part, described as an ostinato by McClary, doesn't always sync up metrically with the violin and cello parts; at times the piano part and the violin and cello part form passages of dissonant intervals. In lieu of harmony, Vandervelde uses meter and repetition to highlight certain pitches in the lines,

supplying the salient tones for the *Urlinie*. This gives the piece sense of prolongation and direction, and a careful background sketch helps reveal it. *Missa Gaia* has a strong 5-line *Urlinie*, but with a prolongation of the dominant instead of the tonic. Furthermore, at the surface level, the melodies constantly rotate through the circle of fifths, obscuring the harmony and causing ambivalence through enharmonic voice leading. In “Music Box,” for example, the chord built on scale degree $\hat{3}$ functions as the dominant, and the piece ends on an unclear tonic.

I have found that making some modifications to the conventional *Urlinie* and its *Bassbrechung* can actually lead to a structure which reveals a great deal about these pieces. While the three pieces in this paper certainly do not adhere to traditional tonal expectations, a traditional tool like Schenkerian analysis can be repurposed in order to make a compelling analysis which accounts for the music’s large-scale coherence and its relation to the text.

Modifications to the traditional Schenkerian structures will depend on the piece in question; they need not be consistent from piece to piece. As demonstrated in Parsons and Ravenscroft 2016, the common analytical practice for feminine music is to take an eclectic approach, where the analysis comprehends the composer’s biographical background and compositional intentions, creating a method of analysis unique to the piece. Using modified reductive analysis methods can keep in step with philosophies that are already established, if the modifications stem from knowledge of the composer’s philosophy and perspective.

The ultimate goal of this project is to focus on how these analyses enhance the narrative in the music. Each of the pieces studied in this project grows out of a narrative

or story provided by the composer. Larsen and Folio set their music to text, with carefully-selected poetry. Larsen draws upon the idea of liturgy and Wendell Berry's poetry to show how we all have a place within the greater rhythms of life. Folio uses Susan Albertine's poetry and stage drama to tell the story of family drama. Vandervelde's *Genesis II* does not have a text, but Vandervelde, who intended to use the piece to tell a story with distinctly feminine themes, has confirmed that the piece is about the process of birth and about the relationship between mother and child.⁹ I will show in my individual analyses how the overarching narrative corresponds to the background structure of each piece, and how the narrative motivates details of motivic, harmonic and rhythmic structure.

⁹ McClary, 116.

CHAPTER II

TWO HEARTBEATS IN *GENESIS II*

In 1987 Susan McClary introduced feminist theory to music academia with her controversial article, “Getting Down Off the Beanstalk.” McClary’s argument was that women were writing substantial music that didn’t have to adhere to the common practice narrative of music written by men. Women were telling a different story.

McClary’s article has played an important role in inspiring the music-academic community to consider gender as a factor in music analysis. While there is still debate over the role gender plays, if any, in the aesthetic of a musical work, numerous questions have been raised about whether or not different methods of analysis are biased toward one gender or another. As was the case in McClary’s article, strict reductive, Schenkerian-style analysis is often accused of being biased to favor masculine music; it assumes that the music will set a harmonic expectation, thwart it, and then return to meet the expectation. The masculinity of the tool is assumed because the process can be construed as a sexual metaphor which favors the experience of a heterosexual man; it can also be suggested that, because Schenkerian analysis has been developed in order to study music written primarily by male composers, it is suited for music with masculine aesthetic. Therefore, when used strictly, Schenkerian analysis doesn’t reveal much about music that exudes a feminine experience.

However, the following analyses will show how, with specific modifications, reductive analysis can actually be very useful in exploring the narratives of feminine music and how they are realized musically. This first case study examines Janika Vandervelde’s piece, *Genesis II*, the featured case study for McClary’s article. The

structure highlights the salient notes in the background by emphasizing them contextually for an extended period of time. The reduction also shows a structural linear descent which enhances Vandervelde's poetic metaphor in the music.

Genesis II tells a story of the relationship between mother and child, from birth to independence. This story and the music that tells it has significant feminine nuance; it is about the experience of motherhood, from the anticipation of birth to nursing, holding, and bonding with the new child. Vandervelde's motherhood story ebbs and flows; as any parent knows, it never really stops. Surface level details in *Genesis II* reflect the ebbing and flowing of motherhood: In the opening bars, for example a whole-step ostinato recurs in the parts of all of the instruments, creating a gentle yet forward-moving effect.

Example 1.1

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Example 1.1. The first system includes staves for violin (vln), viola (vlc), and piano (pf). The violin and viola parts feature a melodic line with a whole-step ostinato. The piano part has a bass line with a similar ostinato. Dynamics range from *pp* to *mp*, with a fermata over the piano part and a circled 'E' below it. The second system includes staves for flute (fl) and piano (pf). The flute part has a melodic line with a whole-step ostinato. The piano part has a bass line with a similar ostinato. Dynamics range from *p* to *mf*.

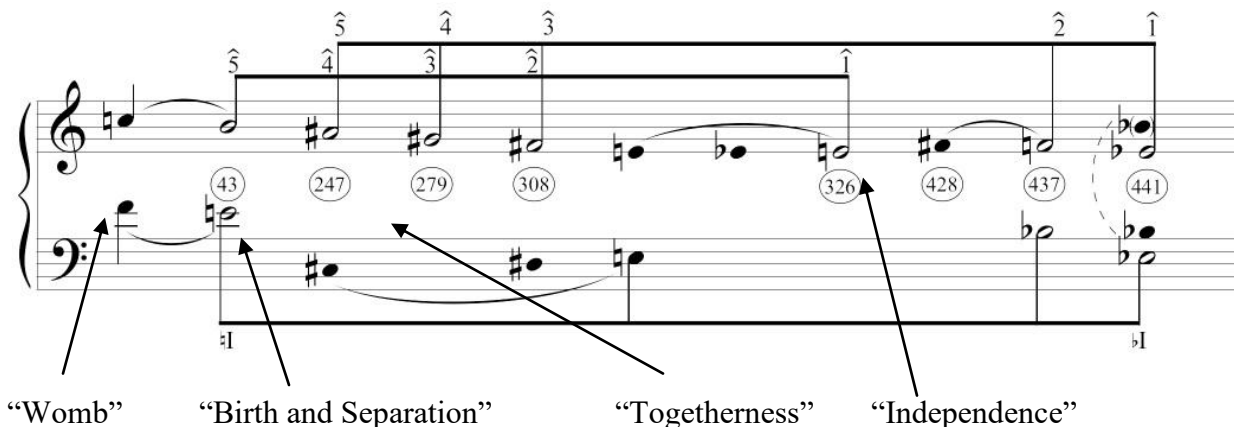
Vandervelde, *Genesis II* mm. 1-16

Notice in m. 9 that the piano's ostinato changes to a repeated motive consisting of two leaps of a perfect fifth followed by a whole step down; the perfect fifth leaps are an elaboration on the original whole step motive, detail that enhances the piece's minimalistic character without changing the tonal center.

Rather than a common-practice harmonic progression that one might find in a classical form, where keys rhetorically counter one another, the harmonic shifts in *Genesis II* are more like arrival points at different tonal centers along a lifelong journey; the slow harmonic changes over time, the consistent timbre, and the massive length of the piece imply longevity. The texture and surface motion is gentle due to the characteristic repeated patterns and the timbre created by the violinist's and cellist's light bowings. The shifts are discernible, as would be expected in post-minimalist music, but they are not obtrusive. Rather, they reflect the narrative of a gentle mother watching her child grow up.

Overall, the piece has soft edges; while changes happen, there are no jolting surprises. Embedded within the approachable, rolling story, however, is a deep and engaging background structure. The structure, represented in this analysis by a Schenkerian-style reductive graph, enhances the narrative by highlighting the relationship between the mother and child featured in the story.

Figure 1.1



Background Graph of *Genesis II*

A large-form overview of the piece helps put the reduction into its narrative frame. The beginning 42 measures and the final 12 measures starting at m. 437 are both marked “Prologue.” While they have different key signatures, they both emphasize the note F. When the emphasis shifts back to F in m. 437, it is saying that the narrative has come full circle. Now, however, there is new life, and thus the emphasis shifts from F to E-flat at the end of the piece.

This final cadence reminds us that while birth and motherhood are key factors in the cycle of life, the cycle is not merely redundant. New life falls in step with old life, represented by the return to F, but it brings new nuances, represented by the progression to E-flat. While mother and child, old and new, are connected, they are also distinct individuals.

Methodology and Analysis:

In the 1980s, Vandervelde was working in the idiom of post-minimalism, inspired by the rotational symmetry of Tai Chi. She was also meditating on the idea of process

and growth, and hence produced a series of chamber works entitled *Genesis*. Vandervelde says that she designed *Genesis I* and *Genesis II* to be complementary so that they could be played as a set; together, they create symmetry, with *Genesis II* ending where *Genesis I* began.

Strict Schenkerian analysis is not practical for analyzing *Genesis II*; it does not function within common-practice harmony or feature traditional resolutions of dissonance. Instead, the piece consists of a series of shifting tonal centers that are defined contextually by melodically emphasizing the notes in the *Urlinie*, sustaining the notes over long periods, and durational emphasis, but which can be represented in a reduction, similar to Felix Salzer's reductive analyses in *Structural Hearing*.¹⁰ One will notice that the tonal shifts occur over long periods of time; this communicates the piece's post-minimalist idiom. This idiom is an important consideration in this work, as it reflects the longevity of the growing-up process. While the sketch alone does not constitute a full resource for describing the narrative in the piece, it is a helpful supplement.

For structural tones, I have chosen supported salient tones that recur throughout their pertinent sections in the music. These tones often occur either in the violin and cello's ostinato, or in half notes which punctuate different phrases; an example of a combination of these techniques is below.

¹⁰ Salzer, *Structural Hearing in Tonal Music: Two Volumes Bound as One*, New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1962, found on p. 188 of Vol. 2. See example 417. Salzer shows an unusual *Bassbechung* for Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*, consisting of a stepwise upward progression and ending with an octave leap to the tonic.

Example 1.2

The image shows two systems of handwritten musical notation. The first system consists of two staves with various notes, rests, and dynamics markings including *mp*, *pp*, *p*, and *mf*. A small box on the left side of the first system is labeled "m. 324". The second system also consists of two staves, with two green ovals drawn around specific intervals in the upper staff. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 324-328

Two intervals emphasized in the above example are the third between the F# and A# in m. 324 and the minor sixth between the C# and A# in m. 327. Both intervals are emphasized by duration, as the half notes are the longest notes in the texture. However, the sixth between the C# and A# are also emphasized by consonance with the cello part, making them more salient; this interval is also more frequent in the passage than the third between the F# and A#. By graphing the structural tones, I have found a hearable linear descent on the surface (not represented in my background graph).

A careful enharmonic analysis shows that there are actually two lines present within the *Urlinie*; one in E Lydian represents the mother, and one in E-flat Aeolian represents the child. This symbolizes simultaneously their unity and individuality, a metaphorical depiction of the close relationship between mother and child.

Figure 1.2

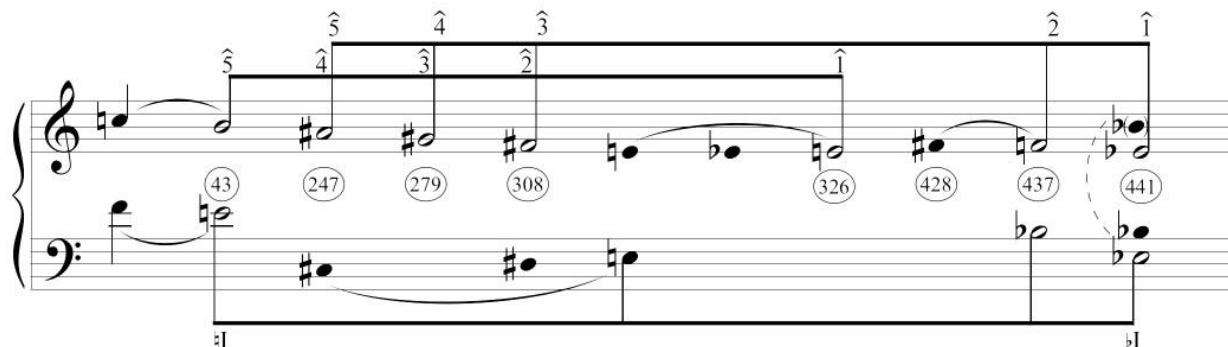


Figure 2: Schenkerian Graph of *Genesis II*

The complete sketch of the background of *Genesis II* also shows that F, the first bass note, leads relatively quickly to E, which prevails as the bass note for the composition until the penultimate leap to B-flat. With the change of the key signature in m. 43, F becomes an F#.

In the treble voice, the A# arrives in m. 247. Enharmonically, it is the scale degree ^5 in the child's key (E-flat), enabling the argument that the A# actually foreshadows the B-flat in the bass in m. 433.

Vandervelde imagines a specific narrative for *Genesis II*. The opening 43 measures symbolize the wholeness of a mother carrying an unborn child. There are two heartbeats, one symbolized by the piano and the other by the violin and cello. Vandervelde alters the different groupings of beats in these first 40 measures, adding 2+3, 3+2, and 3+3+2 measures amidst the 4/4 measures, creating the sensation of two different parts moving as one. The following example of mm. 48-50 demonstrates this.

Example 1.3

The image shows a musical score for Example 1.3, consisting of two systems of staves. The top system has a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The bottom system has two staves, a treble clef on top and a bass clef on the bottom, with the same key signature. A box labeled 'm. 48' is positioned to the left of the first measure of the bottom system. The piano part (bottom system) features a complex rhythmic pattern with annotations: '3+2' above the first measure, '3+2+2' above the second measure, '3+2+2' above the third measure, '3' above the fourth measure, and '3+2' above the fifth measure. The violin and cello parts (top system) are mostly silent, with some notes visible in the first measure.

Vandervelde, *Genesis II*, mm. 48-52

In m. 43, the child is born. In mm. 45-47, the piano introduces a new ostinato, which will prevail throughout the rest of the section, and the violin and cello are quiet. They slowly enter and build until m. 187, when the strings go out of sync with the ostinato.

The child becomes more independent. In the narrative, one might sense that the mother is holding, perhaps nursing, her newborn from mm. 43-187. Then they separate, and the child becomes more independent. During this separation, the piano part and the cello and violin part operate out of time with one another. This is the place in the background graph where E, the I chord in the mother's *Urlinie*, is portrayed.

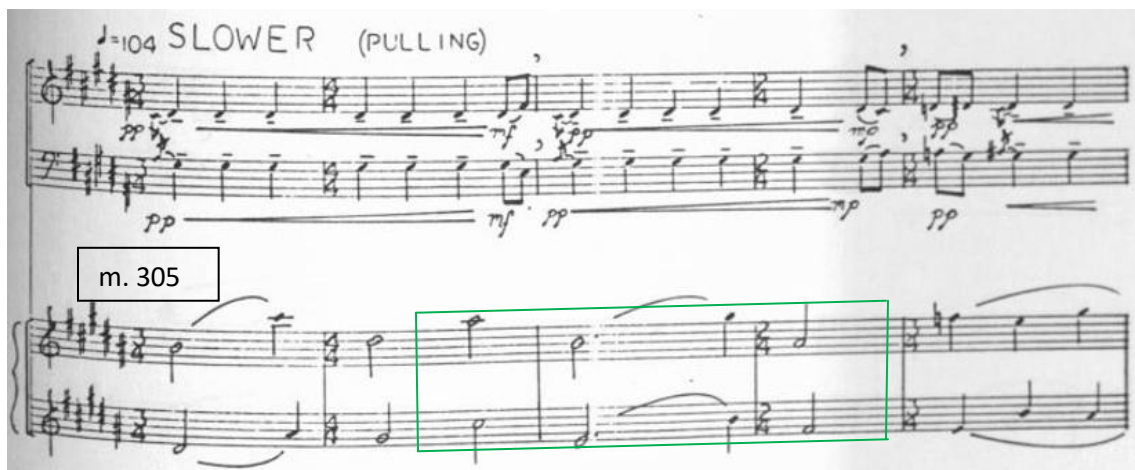
After a period of separation, the two parts sync up again in m. 288, and they remain in sync until the end of the piece, symbolizing a reunion of mother and child.

The sketch itself (see Figure 1.2) is a striking visual extension of the narrative. The primary tone is B, scale degree $\hat{5}$ in the key of E, a key which is prevalent throughout most of the piece. For the sake of the narrative, we will call E the tonal center which represents the mother figure (given the five sharp key signature, the majority of the

piece might be conceptualized in E Lydian). In m. 201, scale degree $\hat{4}$, A#, becomes prevalent. A# can also be spelled enharmonically as B-flat, which acts as the fifth in the key of E-flat Aeolian. E-flat represents the tonal center of the child's narrative, and therefore the B-flat in m. 201 structurally functions as scale degree $\hat{5}$ in the child's tonal center while simultaneously functioning as scale degree $\hat{4}$ in the mother's tonal center. This enharmonic relationship is crucial, as it is the pivot between the mother's key and the child's key. Metaphorically, the simultaneous enharmonic lines at the background of the piece represent the close relationship between mother and child.

The two-line heartbeat metaphor continues. In m. 279, G# (A-flat), supported in the bass by C# (D-flat) becomes prominent. In the background, this note is the arrival of scale degrees $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{4}$; they are supported by an open fifth. In m. 308, F# (G-flat) becomes prominent, constituting scale degrees $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{3}$. In the E-flat key, this is a flat III (G-flat) chord.

Example 1.4



Vandervelde, *Genesis II*, mm. 305-309

In m. 309, an F natural becomes prominent in the piano part, representing the child breaking away from the mother for the first time. At the background level, this is

also represented by the arrival of scale degree $\wedge 2$ in the child's fundamental line in m. 437, and it is especially noteworthy because it does not enharmonically share a step with the mother line.

The mother's line reaches scale degree $\wedge 1$ in the piano line in m. 327-328. However, the high register of scale degree $\wedge 1$ in m. 327, combined with the opposing dissonance from the D# in the cello part, obscures the weight of this arrival.

Example 1.5

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is marked 'POCO RIT.' and '8va'. The middle staff has a box labeled 'm. 322' and a green box highlighting a passage with scale degree annotations $\wedge 2$ and $\wedge 3$. The bottom staff has a green circle around a note in the final measure.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 322-328

Shortly after, F# becomes prominent again. Rather than functioning as scale degree $\wedge 2$ in the mother's key, however, it will lead down by half step to F-natural in m. 437, becoming scale degree $\wedge 3$ of the child's *Uralinie*.

Example 1.6

Vandervelde, *Genesis II*, mm. 433-437

In m. 437 (see example 7), F is emphasized in the piano line, both in the right hand and in the left. The arrival on E-flat, scale degree $\hat{1}$, occurs not long afterward in m. 441, giving the child's line a satisfactory arrival.

Example 1.7

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "PROLOGUE" with a tempo marking of quarter note = 120. The score is written on four staves. The first two staves are in the treble clef, and the last two are in the bass clef. The music consists of rhythmic patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes. A box labeled "m. 437" is drawn around the first staff in the first measure. A green line with arrows at both ends connects the first measure of the first staff to the first measure of the second staff. Above the first measure of the second staff is a green caret symbol (^) with a "2" below it. Above the first measure of the third staff is a green caret symbol (^) with a "1" below it. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *p*, and a *cresc.* marking. There are also several bar lines with a slash through them, indicating a change in the musical structure.

Vandervelde, *Genesis II*, mm. 437-441

The Post-Minimalist Idiom and Background Reductions:

Like minimalism, in post-minimalist music, changes in the musical narrative tend to be perceived easily. In *Genesis II*, easily perceived changes coincide with gradual transformations. The structural tone A#, which is prevalent in mm. 201-329, transforms into the B-flat cover tone of E-flat by m. 447.

While the two tones are enharmonic, it is important to differentiate them in the background sketch because they indicate a significant change in harmony. Also, the harmonic function of the structural tone changes from A# as the third of the chord to B-flat as the root and bass note of the chord. The strength of the structural tone within the chord increases when the tone becomes the root; at the structural level, this change helps provide “direction” in the lead-up to the arrival.

The bottom *Urlinie* (see Figure 1.1) is the mother's line; the top *Urlinie* is the child's line. The sketch shows that the two lines align enharmonically in some places, and then they deviate. This illustrates the timeless narrative that children come into the world with a strong dependency on their parents, but as time passes, they become more independent.

In mm. 184-288, Vandervelde employs considerable harmonic and temporal dissonance. In contrast to the general symmetry that Vandervelde intended when she wrote *Genesis I* and *Genesis II*, McClary highlights a moment in *Genesis II* where there are "asymmetries of rhythm and pitch" closer to the surface, which Vandervelde uses quite effectively in the narrative. What is compelling about this surface asymmetry is the fact that it contributes to the easygoing effect of the piece as a whole. As McClary points out, the piano's constant "clockwork" ostinato provides a reference. Despite the harmonic and temporal dissonances, the effect is rather calming.

The asymmetric rhythm also ties into the theme of the narrative; the two different rhythmic grouping patterns symbolize the two figures: mother and child. Early in a baby's life, a mother and child must physically bond and mold together so that the child can nurse and survive. While two individuals are present, they are also together; likewise, the differently grouped meters in the strings and piano parts represent two individuals that are separate but together.

What McClary is referring to has to do with the minimalistic idiom in which the piece is written. While the two parts are still in sync in mm. 182-183, the violin begins playing a trill-like figure in the upper register of the instrument; the bowings are light, and although the notes and rhythms themselves vary, the sweet timbre and consistency of

the light bowings maintain a sense of calm throughout the passage. The repetition of the figure is minimalist in nature, and as such provides a sturdy aural anchor for the passage. In m. 184, the point where the piano part goes out of sync with the strings, the cello enters in an octave below the violin, reinforcing the violin's ostinato and drawing attention away from the piano's 2+3 rhythm. Thus, as the metric grouping of the piano part begins to deviate from the metric grouping of the string parts, this deviation seems gentle and natural. In the narrative, it parallels the first gentle separation of mother and child.

Example 1.8

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three staves. The top staff is marked '7A' and contains a violin part with a repeating eighth-note figure. The middle staff is marked 'm. 184' and contains a cello part with a similar figure. The bottom staff is marked 'ff' and contains a piano part with a 2+3 rhythm. Vertical orange boxes highlight the alignment of notes across the staves, showing how the piano part's 2+3 rhythm deviates from the string parts' 2+2+2 grouping.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 184-187

While the parts are metrically out of sync, their counterpoint is surprisingly consonant.

Key Signature Transitions, the Background, and the Narrative

The harmony of the opening gestures places the beginning of the piece squarely in F major. The parts ornament a fifth between F and C with neighbor notes; in mm. 9-16, the cello part moves to a figure in which G is prominent, causing some dissonance with

the fifth; however, the dissonance is obscured by the F and C within the figure, minimizing any unpleasantness from the dissonance. Also in mm. 9-16, the violin plays a sustained C5, the primary tone and the fifth of the F chord, *sans* vibrato. There is no third until the A is introduced in the piano part in m. 17.

Example 1.9

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'm. 1', shows the violin (vln) and viola (vlc) parts with a series of slurs and rests, and the piano (pf) part with a sustained C5 in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand. The second system, labeled 'm. 9', shows the violin (vln) and viola (vlc) parts with a series of slurs and rests, and the piano (pf) part with a sustained C5 in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand. The piano part is marked with 'mf' and a circled '6'.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 1-16

In the first 17 measures, Vandervelde has already established a minimalistic aesthetic. The additions of dissonant tones, changing figures, and the eventual addition of a third to the chord are easily perceived. While mm. 1-42 remain on the F chord, they establish some important characteristics in the narrative: the gestures are circular, and,

most importantly, there is no change in the harmony. The image of mother with child is delightful and soothing.

As I mentioned earlier, mm. 37-42 call for a *molto accelerando* in which the violin plays a forward-driving repeated figure.

Example 1.10

The image shows a musical score for Example 1.10, consisting of two systems. The first system features a violin part on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The violin part consists of a series of eighth-note figures with accents, moving forward. Above the violin staff, the word 'ACCEL' is written, followed by a dashed line, and then 'MOLTO' followed by another dashed line. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The second system begins at measure 37, marked with a forte 'ff' dynamic. The violin part continues with the same eighth-note figure, now with a 'p^{va}' (pizzicato) marking above it. The piano accompaniment continues with similar patterns, including a 'sfz' (sforzando) marking in the left hand. The score concludes with a double bar line and a final chord.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 37-42

The driving repetitions represent the birth of the child. The birth is exciting but expected, mythical but natural. The music matches this effect by setting up expectation and meeting it with something unexpected. The background sketch shows this transition by simply stepping down from the neighbor tone C in the *Uralinie* to the primary tone B. (In your background sketch from before (Figure 1.1), B was the primary tone and C was an upper neighbor.) The harmony doesn't match traditional Schenkerian models; in the same way, while the *Uralinie* is a five-line, the fact that there are two simultaneous *Uralinien* is unconventional. Thus, the sketch shows the balance between distress and expectation in the section.

One might expect the change of harmony in m. 43, the moment of birth, to be jarring. After all, the tonal center is shifting from an F chord to a E chord, with an emphasis on B, the fifth of the chord. B has a tritone relationship with F, which might in common practice music mean that the shift from F to B would be quite alarming. However, Vandervelde builds up to the transition in m. 43 with *accelerandi* and crescendos, leading the listener to expect the arrival on B. This is also where scale degree $\hat{5}$ of the mother's heartbeat first becomes prominent in the texture.

Example 1.11

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Example 1.11, spanning measures 43 to 47. At the top, there is a tempo change from "SLOWLY" to "A TEMPO" at measure 43, with a metronome marking of quarter note = 100. A green vertical line marks measure 43, with a green "A5" written above it. The score includes various performance markings such as *sfz*, *pp*, and accents. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with markings like "3+2+2" and "3". A green "E:" is written below the piano part at the bottom left. The score is written for piano and includes a green vertical line marking measure 43 and a green "E:" marking below the piano part.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 43-47

Another provocative transition in the piece occurs in mm. 199-204. From mm. 184-198, the violin and cello have been metrically out of sync with the piano. However, when they get back in sync in m. 199, the effect is quite jarring. The cello and violin play a B and F#, an open fifth, while the piano emphasizes an A# below. In m. 203, the violin

and cello juxtapose a C# and a G while the piano part juxtaposes E-F and A#-B semitones.

Example 1.12

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three staves. The top staff is marked 'RIT' and 'NON-VIB'. The middle staff has a box labeled 'm. 201' and a 'pp' marking. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a 'pp' marking. The score is written in a style typical of a composer's manuscript, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 201-204

In m. 206 after this point in the narrative, mother and child reunite. The dissonance and articulation in mm. 199-204 is answered by consonance in mm. 205. The texture thins out so that only the violin and cello are playing. The absence of the piano could be considered a representation that only the unified figure of mother and child is present.

Example 1.13

The image displays three staves of handwritten musical notation. The first staff, labeled 'm. 211', shows a melodic line in the upper voice with various accidentals and a piano part below it. The second staff, labeled 'm. 215', continues the melodic line with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic marking. The third staff, labeled 'm. 221', begins with a 'RIT' (ritardando) instruction, followed by 'PIU MOSSO' (piu mosso) and a tempo marking of quarter note = 120. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings such as p, pp, and mp.

Vandervelde, Genesis II, mm. 211-225

The reunion is symbolized in the upcoming synchronicity of the violin and cello parts as well. The string parts sync up again with the piano part in m. 244 and the key signature returns to five sharps. Mother and child are reunited.

The last tonal transition to discuss is the transition in mm. 432-437, where the key signature gradually changes from five sharps to five flats. In m. 432, the cello and violin hold out a trill on an inverted A# diminished chord; the piano planes between a C#/A# stack and a E/B stack.

Example 1.14

The image shows a handwritten musical score for two staves, violin and cello. The top staff is the violin part, and the bottom staff is the cello part. The score is for measures 431 and 432. Measure 431 is highlighted with a box and labeled 'm. 431'. The violin part has a 32/16 ratio and a 3/4 time signature. The cello part has a 7+6/16 ratio and a 'CARAC' marking. Both parts have 'fff' dynamics. Waveform plots are shown for both parts, illustrating the dissonance and its softening effect.

Vandervelde, *Genesis II*, mm. 431-432

Again, the harsh effect of this dissonance is softened by both the timbre of the strings and the frame of reference within the post-minimalist model.

In m. 434, the contour of the violin and cello lines mirror one another, going back to Vandervelde's theme of symmetry and two independent entities acting together in unity. The lines emphasize the perfect fifth relationship between C# and F#. At the end of m. 435, the cello freezes after playing an F# and the violin freezes after playing a D-flat.

Example 1.15

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. A box labeled 'm. 433' is placed on the left side of the score. Above the top staff, there are performance instructions: 'Rapidly' with a double bar line, 'Slowly' with a double bar line, 'Pont.' (Pizzicato), 'Pizz.' (Pizzicato), and 'Freeze' with a double bar line. There are also time markings: '8"', '14"', and '10"'. Below the top staff, there are dynamic markings 'ff' and 'ppp'. The bottom staff has the instruction 'w/ forearms on lowest keys' and a 'Freeze' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Vandervelde, *Genesis II*, mm. 433-436

In m. 440, the harmony reverts back to the path of the *Uralinie*. It lands on an Eb-Bb fifth: that completing the child's fundamental line. As I mentioned earlier, that Vandervelde marks mm. 437-449 "Prologue." The narrative implied in this section is two-fold: life has a tendency to follow a cycle, but there is always room for the unexpected. While the dyads in mm. 437-444 set up the expectation for a cycle, the ambiguous harmony at the end of the piece indicates that, in the midst of a cycle, there is room for spontaneity.

Example 1.16

PROLOGUE ♩ = 120

(^2)

pp

p

m. 437

pp

cresc

p

cresc

Vandervelde, *Genesis II*, mm. 437-441

Concluding Thoughts:

Graphing the background structure of *Genesis II* presents two major challenges: graphing in a post-minimalist idiom and dealing with a structure that is not supported by traditional harmony. The post-minimalist idiom actually makes it easier to find places in the music where harmonic transitions happen, where changes in the background structure may occur. In spite of these easily discernible guideposts, Vandervelde's use of minimalism as a way to soften harmonic dissonance simultaneously obscures these transitions.

The length of the piece also challenges the graphing process. At a 16:00 run time, there is a lot of information in the score (and the listening), which might fatigue the careful listener. Fortunately, the metaphorical narrative helps alleviate the weight of all of these challenges and clarify Vandervelde's main point. Simply put, the experience of

hearing the piece with the narrative in mind helps make for a more meaningful understanding of the story.

The image of pregnancy, birth, and a child's growing up should be represented by a process that takes a long time because in life, changes happen gradually. Changes aren't always clear-cut, which accounts for Vandervelde's use of timbre to obscure harmonic dissonance. The changes in life also tend to follow a natural pattern, making a five-line *Urlinie* a viable choice for the metaphor. Although the music doesn't adhere to the *Urlinie* in a traditional way, the five-line structure is still a salient reference for it.

CHAPTER III

CYCLES AND DIRECTION IN *MISSA GAIA*

Introduction and Background:

Libby Larsen's *Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth* (1992) is a keystone work in the output of one of America's most prolific composers. My analysis of the "Introit" combines two different methods of analysis: using circle-of-fifths progressions to visualize the motion on the surface, and modified Schenkerian analysis for the underlying structure. Using both methods of analysis helps provide a fuller text/music analysis of the underlying metaphors in the movement and in the rest of the mass.

Missa Gaia doesn't exist in a vacuum; it is the last in an unofficial series of pieces Larsen wrote in the late 1980s and early 1990s that celebrate the earth and life from the ground. The other two pieces in the series are *Up, Where the Air Gets Too Thin* and *In a Winter Garden*. Denise Von Glahn¹¹ discusses the group of three pieces and where they fit into Larsen's output as a composer. The stories in the first two pieces inspire the story in *Missa Gaia*, and thus deserve attention here.

The text and musical elements in *Up, Where the Air Gets Too Thin* and *In a Winter Garden* explicitly explore the relationship between mankind and the earth. *In a Winter Garden* is a sort of memoir about Larsen's relationship with her own garden. In Larsen's Minnesota home, her garden is hidden by snow most of the year. Instead of losing heart, Larsen trusts that when spring melts the snow, she can depend on the earth to provide a bounty. The wear and tear of winter forces her to repair and revitalize the garden year after year; she and her garden have a relationship where they depend on each

¹¹ Von Glahn, Denise, "Music, Place, and the Everyday Sacred: Libby Larsen and Lessons in Environmental Awareness," *Contemporary Music Review*, 35:3, 296-317, 2016, 267.

other for survival. Thus, following her typical pattern of turning conventional ideas on their heads, Larsen's garden is not merely her realm, but her partner. Neither she nor the garden is submissive, but both must be engaged in order to thrive.

Up Where the Air Gets Too Thin tells the story of mountains. Larsen confronts the misconception that mountains are sedentary and solid. By using tumultuous musical phenomena, she aurally illustrates the constant growth and crumbling of the Himalayas. She musically challenges the misconception of eternity with the reality of platonic turmoil.

Why a Mass?

Missa Gaia tells both the story of gardening and the story of the earth's ever-turning rhythm. Using a mass helps ground the story of the earth in something both meditative and universal. Liturgy reminds us that we are part of a larger story, a larger rhythm. Rituals engage us with something greater.

Thus, using the format of Christian liturgy provides Larsen with a tangible way to connect with a big idea. In Christianity, the rhythm of the liturgy is a microcosm of the Gospel, the Christian story of man's fall and restoration. Typically, the "Kyrie" (Lord, Christ have mercy) expresses man's need for reconciliation with God; "Agnus Dei" expresses God's response to man's cry for help. Other movements within the mass, such as "Gloria," celebrate God's greatness. Although *Missa Gaia* doesn't use the traditional text of the Catholic mass, the poetry that Larsen chooses to use within the structure of the mass reflects an analogous process of restoration. It talks about the earth being renewed and about man and nature being reconciled.

Analysis

This analysis will focus on the “Introit” movement of the mass, where Larsen sets the text “Within the Circles of Our Lives,” a poem by Wendell Berry. Like the traditional introit that opens a mass, the “Introit” from *Missa Gaia* prepares the listener for the restoration that follows. Berry’s poem presents a metaphor of circles within circles, implying a very active role for the people within the circles; while we respect the fixed nature of orbits and life cycles, people are empowered to move from one circle to another. Being able to move and develop is the crucial first step in the process of restoration.

Along with the surface-level emphasis on cycles, circles, and turning, Larsen’s “Introit” has a definite sense of harmonic direction. The five-line *Urlinie* at the background level illustrates this. While on the surface there is cyclical movement, the music always has an underlying directional quality. Like a liturgy, there is a deeper rhythm happening underneath the pomp and circumstance of the ritual.

Larsen musically embodies the circle in the circle-of-fifths progression that permeates the piece. Thus, circle-of-fifths charts are an obvious choice for analysis. Taking note of the “take-off” and “landing” points in the circle of fifths charts helps clarify the harmonic structure which binds the piece together. The following Schenkerian-style graph shows the underlying harmonic structure of the piece, highlighting a level of coherence which might otherwise be lost in the open intervals on the surface level. The circles of fifths creates chains on the surface that land on structural tones.

Figure 2.1

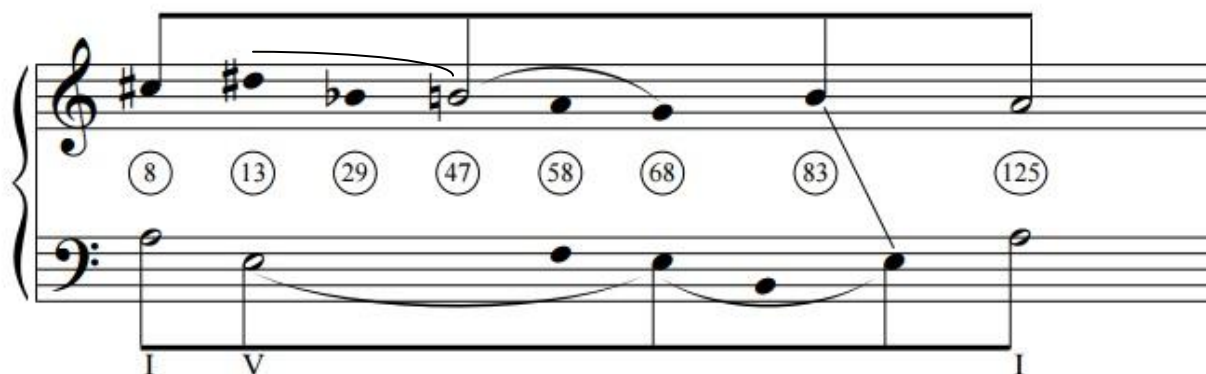


Figure 2.1: Schenkerian Graph of "Missa Gaia"

The graph shows a clear 3-line with a very long prolongation of the dominant chord; although several chromatic harmonies pepper the surface, the E chord is the point to which chords return throughout most of the piece. It's worth noting that while many motivic gestures recur, this piece is thru-composed, and the prolonged harmonic progression shows this. Thus, the prolongation of the dominant provides a metaphoric context for the act of exploration within parameters.

The very first vocal gesture (mm. 2-6) is a circle-of-fifths progression beginning on D and ending on C#. C#, or scale degree $\hat{3}$, is the first structural tone in the background sketch. Where the C# occurs on its pertinent circle-of-fifths diagram also sets precedent for following salient tones; often circles of fifths will end up on the third of a structural chord. For instance, a circle of fifths ending in G#, the third in an E major triad, usually indicates that the structural harmony supporting the circle of fifths is E major.

Figure 2.2

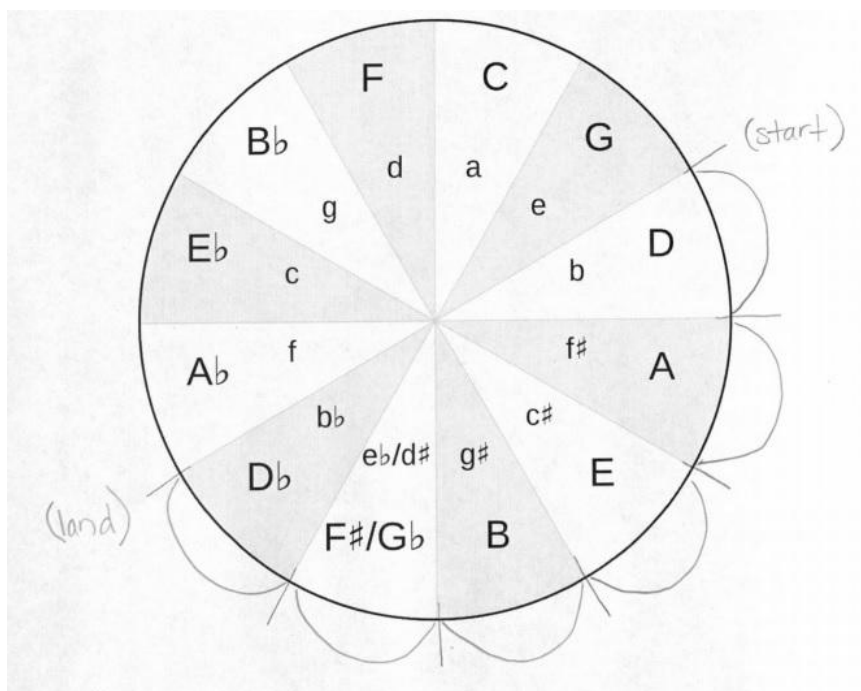


Figure 2.2: Circle of fifths diagram for “Introit,” mm. 2-6

The poetry invites listeners to contemplate one of the oldest literary and musical tropes: the circle. A long-standing and commonly-used metaphor, the circle has come to represent a wide variety of ideas, from the obsession of Schubert’s Gretchen to the resignation to the seasons of life in Joni Mitchell’s “Circle Game.” The circle catches characters up in all kinds of cycles, but the common denominator is that the characters are often caught. It’s difficult to break free from a circle. Berry’s poetry, however, focuses more on the interaction of orbits and people’s abilities to traverse through different types of circles, than the inescapability of the circle.

“Within the Circles of Our Lives” (Wendell Berry)

Within the circles of our lives
We dance the circles of the years,
The circles of the seasons
Within the circles of the years,
The cycles of the moon
Within the circles of the seasons,
The circles of our reasons
Within the cycles of the moon.

Again, again we come and go,
Changed, changing. Hands
Join, unjoin in love and fear,
Grief and joy. The circles turn,
Each giving into each, into all.
Only music keeps us here,

Each by all the others held.
In the hold of hands and eyes we turn in pairs,
That joining each to all again.

And then we turn, alone,
Out of the sunlight gone
Into the darker circles of return.

Instead letting herself get caught up in one particular circle, Larsen sets Berry’s text about systems of circles to a musical system of “circles within circles,” where moving through different key areas within a circle-of-fifths progression mirrors the message of connectivity and interdependence in the text. Despite the constant rotation

through the circle of fifths, there is clear, discernible prolongation of a simple harmonic progression, reduced at the background level to I-V/V-V-I; this large, circular progression further illustrates the metaphor of circles within circles.

The opening gestures in the orchestral parts and the vocal parts present a bold statement. In mm. 2-4, the choir exclaims in unison: “within the circles of our lives.” The anacrusis allows the music to follow the iambic stress in the syllables of the text, providing striking text clarity. Loaded into these opening notes is the blueprint for motion in the rest of the piece. The sung melody moves in a circle of fifths, illustrating a circle aurally and visually.

Example 2.1

The musical score for Example 2.1 features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a Piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 80$, freely, chant-like. The lyrics are "With - in the cir - cles of our lives, we dance". The piano part includes a rehearsal mark "(for rehearsal only)".

Larsen, “Introit,” mm. 1-4

While the basic harmonic progression spinning through the piece is fairly straightforward (V/V, V, I), the voice leading at the cadences is novel. Stacked fourths

cause tension while fifths provide a sense of resolution; this becomes a particularly useful expressive tool when Larsen repeats text in an antecedent/consequent relationship. For example, the interval on the word “years” in m. 9 (the cadence point of an antecedent) is a fourth, while the interval on the same word in m. 22 (the cadence point of the associated consequent), a discernible arrival point, is a perfect fifth. Larsen uses the same device in m. 56 when the basses and tenors hold the word “changed” on a fourth, and then they open it up to a fifth in m. 58 on the word “changing.” Although it does not harmonically function as a cadence, the arrival on the inverted C7 chord in m. 58 is a clear arrival point before a transition in harmony, singled out by the chord’s duration and the voice leading into the chord by semitone.

Figure 2.3

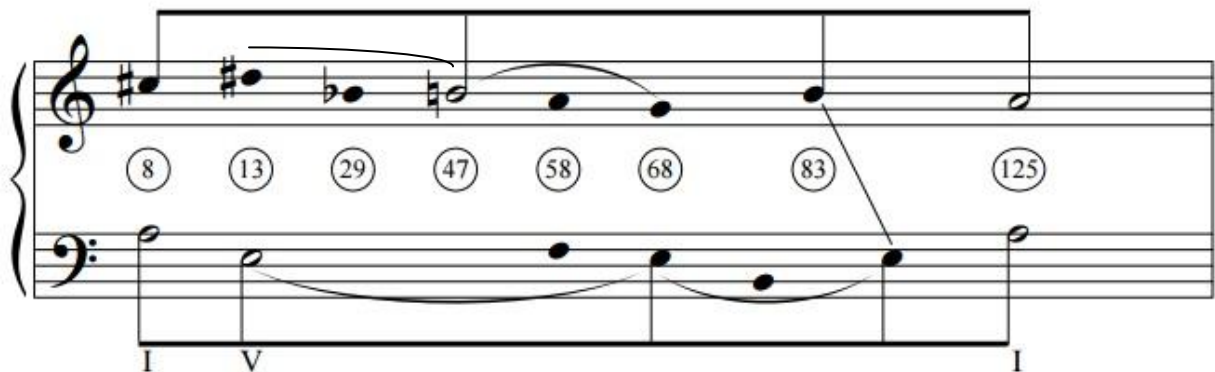


Figure 2.3: Schenkerian Graph of “Introit”

As the graph shows, the F triad, which resolves the aforementioned C7, is, in the bass, a neighbor figure that leads from an E chord and leads into the tonic.

In mm. 125-129, the bass voice alternates between an A and a G, creating an oscillation of a fourth and a fifth at the final cadence; it also encapsulates musically the circle metaphor in the text. The triumphant arrival on the A major chord in mm. 128-129

is a bold ending to the movement. The changes in tonality and cadential intervals illustrate beautifully the nuances and complexities of Larsen's circle metaphor.

Larsen's use of the circle of fifths sometimes precipitates enharmonic "puns." In m. 24, for example, the harmony suddenly and unexpectedly shifts outside the circle of fifths from A major to B-flat major; by the beginning of m. 26, the harmonic focus shifts back to A major. However, because the circle of fifths progression in m. 26 begins on a D in the soprano, by the time the cadence arrives in m. 28, the root is A#. This incremental motion from D to A# explains and justifies the B-flat pitch center in m. 24.

Example 2.2

The image displays a musical score for Example 2.2, consisting of two systems. The first system (measures 22-31) features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a Piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "years The cir - cles of the sea - son with - in the". The second system (measures 27-31) continues the vocal parts with lyrics: "cir - cles of the years. Ah with - in the cir - cles, cir - cles". A green circle highlights a passage in measures 29-31, where the vocal parts have a melodic line and the piano accompaniment has a specific harmonic texture. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, and *f*.

Larsen, "Introit," mm. 22-31

In m. 30, the circle of fifths begins on C#, progressing to E major in first inversion in m. 33. The obscured E chord begins another circle of fifths progression,

pictured in Figure 2, which ends on a C minor six chord in the first inversion in m. 36.

This the first time that the circle of fifths emphasizes a dissonant chord.

Example 2.3

Musical score for Example 2.3, measures 32-36. The score is in 4/4 time and features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and Piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "with - in the cir - cles of the years". The piano part features a sequence of chords: C minor (m. 32), F major (m. 33), C minor (m. 34), F major (m. 35), and C minor (m. 36). The vocal parts have dynamics ranging from *mp* to *f*. The Soprano part has a fermata over the final note in m. 36.

Musical score for Example 2.3, measures 36-40. The score is in 4/4 time and features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and Piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "the cy - cles of the moon". The piano part features a sequence of chords: C minor (m. 36), F major (m. 37), C minor (m. 38), F major (m. 39), and C minor (m. 40). The vocal parts have dynamics ranging from *sub. p* to *sf*. The Soprano part has a fermata over the final note in m. 40. A green oval highlights the piano accompaniment in measures 36-38.

Larsen, "Introit," mm. 32-38

In m. 36, the figure moves through yet another circle of fifths progression to E in m. 37, which is immediately obscured by a tritone in the bass voice. In m. 37-38, the voices enter in stacks, forming a cluster at the end of m. 38. Metaphorically, the material in mm. 24-38 alludes to phase. Cycles, like the moon's phases, are not always predictable or steady. The moon, while steady in its own phase, is out of phase with the daily rotation of the earth. While the earth depends on the moon's gravitational pull to regulate the tides and weather, the phase of the moon will never align with the rising and setting of the sun. The two orbits are interdependent without being co-dependent. As the orbit of the moon is smaller than the orbits of the earth and sun, the intervals stacked in mm. 37-38 are smaller; they stack in thirds instead of the familiar fifths in the earlier motives. The thirds build a tonal cluster in m. 38, sounding ethereal, like the moon. A fermata over the cluster elongates the moment, giving the listener a chance to pause and contemplate the mystery and complexities of orbits.

The percussion melody rings in the return of the original key in mm. 47-52 through the familiar circle of fifths progression. This time, octaves strengthen the progression. In m. 52, the entrances are staggered, allowing the voices to be "coming and going" out of sync. Then, true to the text it paints, everything "changes" in m. 60 when the voices all enter on a D-flat.

Example 2.4

Musical score for Example 2.4, measures 55-60. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system contains measures 55-58. The second system contains measures 59-60. The lyrics are: "go, changed, chang - ing." The music includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and a circled number 6 above the final measure of the first system.

Musical score for Example 2.4, measures 60-64. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system contains measures 60-61. The second system contains measures 62-64. The lyrics are: "Hands join, un - join in love and". The music includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. A green box highlights measures 60-61.

Larsen, "Introit," mm. 55-64

The measures leading up to m. 60 have several features that do not appear earlier in the song. Sequential triads in m. 55 lead into augmented rhythms in mm. 56-58. In mm. 60-61, the voices come in on octaves, another first in this song. The D-flats in m. 60 connect the F major chord in m. 59 with the upcoming B-flat major chord in m. 62. This is a transitional moment in the poetry as well. In the first stanza, Berry talks about cycles in the universe; here, Berry shifts the focus to community.

Rather than returning to E major, however, in m. 66, the B-flat in the bass descends chromatically to an A, ringing in the arrival of an A major chord, the tonic key.

Figure 2.4

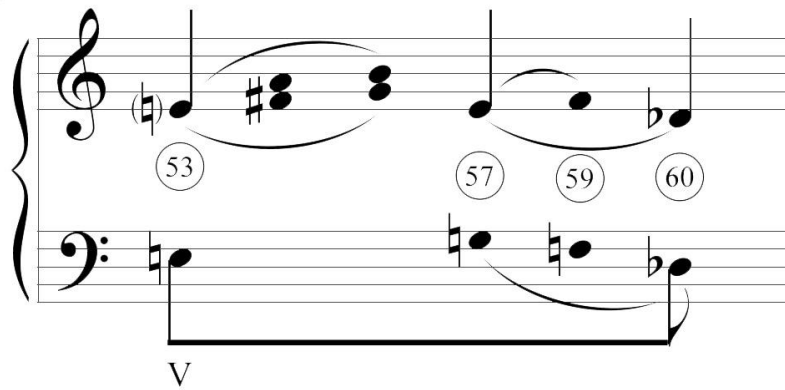


Figure 2.4: Middle Ground Sketch “Introit,” mm. 53-60

The middle ground graph in figure from mm. 53-60 above shows a *Bassbrechung* moving from E, the prolonged bass note in the background, connecting to D-flat, a middle ground neighbor tone. The graph also shows inner voices, emphasizing the importance of triadic harmony in the section. There is a connection here between the music and Berry’s poetry; as Berry talks about “change,” the *Bassbrechung* changes, momentarily.

Example 2.5

Larsen, “Introit,” mm. 64-67

While the chord changes in this passage are a bit bizarre, the tonal center successfully shifts back to the home key of A in m. 66. It then returns to E major in m. 68, keeping the harmony focused on the dominant in the *Bassbrechung*.

Example 2.6

The musical score for Example 2.6 consists of three systems. The first system contains the vocal parts for Soprano (S) and Alto (A) in the top staff, and Tenor (T) and Bass (B) in the bottom staff. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in the second system. The score begins at measure 74, marked with a box containing the number 8. The tempo is marked *f* (forte) and the dynamics shift to *sub. p* (subito piano). The lyrics are: "The cir - cles turn — The cir - cles turn — each giv - ing in - to each, —". The music features a circle of fifths progression in hocket style, with overlapping vocal entries and piano accompaniment. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated in the final measure of the system.

Larsen, "Introit," mm. 74-79

In m. 71, the circle of fifths progression returns in hocket style, starting on the note A in the choir. The voices sing the text in a round, engaging in a game of musical tag; as the sopranos and altos finish their entrance in mm. 75, for example, the tenors and basses enter to complete the motive.

Figure 2.5

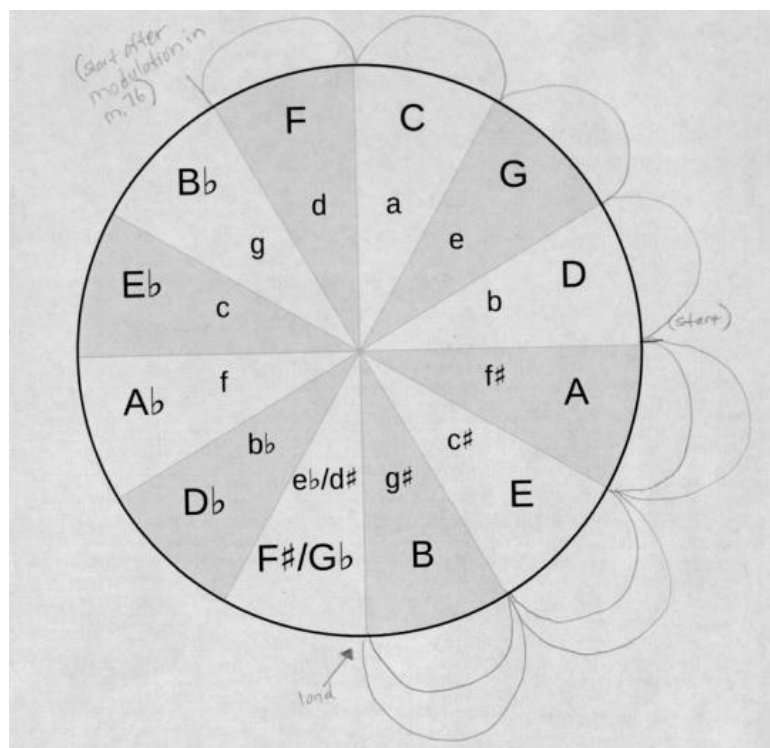


Figure 2.5: Circle of fifths progression for mm. 76-80

In m. 84, dynamic amplification and rhythmic augmentation on the A major chord portray the words “keeps us;” it is a reminder of the home key. Rather than staying on the A major chord, however, the circle of fifths progression continues through the end of m. 85, landing on the pitch B in octaves on the word “here,” indicating that the section is still grounded in the dominant harmony, as the background graph indicates. In m. 88, the parallel fifths in the upper and lower voices are offset by a whole step, creating quartal clusters. Based on Larsen’s use of fourths to create tension before resolution at a cadence, the clustered fourths here in this measure indicate a significant formal half cadence.

Example 2.7

9
86 *poco accel.* *mf* *f* *ritard.* *p*

S held, held.

A *mf* *f* *p* held, held.

T *mf* *f* *p* oth - ers held, oth - ers held.

B *mf* *f* *p* all the oth - ers held, all the oth - ers held.

each by all the oth - ers held, each by all the oth - ers held.

9
86 *poco accel.* *ritard.*

Pno. *mf* *f* *p*

Larsen, "Introit," mm. 86-90

In mm. 93-112, Larsen increases tension in the texture by using imitation. The soprano and alto voices respectively pair up with the tenor and bass voices, playing the same game of tag found in mm. 74-80. The crescendo marking in mm. 97-99 reminds us of yet another application of the circle metaphor: that turning in circles creates momentum. This calls to mind children grabbing hands and spinning; together, they spin with a great deal of force. If one child lets go, however, both children are likely to fall.

Example 2.9

104

S
each to all a - gain, we turn in pairs, we

A
each to all a - gain, we turn in

T
each to all a - gain, we turn in pairs, we

B
each to all a - gain, we turn in

Pno.
104

p *mf* *cresc.* [12] *cresc.*

Larsen, "Introit," mm. 104-108

At this point, the background sketch shows that the dominant has been prolonged for a significant amount of time. As the melodies continue spinning through the circle of fifths, the time arrives for a tonic resolution. Rather than a common practice cadence, however, Larsen resolves to the tonic through her own harmonic language; in the final measures, the harmony oscillates between E major and A major many times, and finally stabilizes on A major. It is a triumphant moment.

As the final cadence plays out, Larsen leaves the listener room to meditate on the final text: "and then we turn alone, out of the sunlight, gone into the darker circles of return." When we've finally run through the different circles, phased in and out of sync, and experienced the wild rush of spinning in pairs, we get to join another part of the

cycle. And from there, the options are unimagined and endless. The singers and the performers are ready for the rest of the liturgy.

Concluding Thoughts:

Liturgy provides us with an opportunity to both meditate on where we are and where we're going. It makes us part of a greater story. By analyzing "Introit" with a surface-level tool such as circle-of-fifths diagrams and a background tool such as Schenkerian analysis, we can gain a fuller understanding of the deeper narrative in Larsen's composition. Larsen shows us that though our life involves motion through different kinds of circle, it is not random movement. There is an underlying coherence; a long-range progression to a goal. Modified Schenkerian analysis is instrumental in showing what that goal is, and how the piece attains it.

CHAPTER IV

TIME, PERSPECTIVE, AND METAMORPHOSIS IN “MUSIC BOX”

Conception and Introduction:

The perpetually-turning wheel is a frequent expressive feature in feminine pieces such as Vandervelde’s *Genesis II* and the “Introit” from Larsen’s *Missa Gaia*, but it also appears in art works based on ideas such as obsession and unrest. In “Music Box,” the metaphor of obsessive perpetuation is present within a feminine piece of art.

Susan Albertine penned the poem “Music Box” specifically for Folio to set to music. Although the poem is Albertine’s first collaboration on a choral piece, she had already established a practice of giving her works as gifts. Thus, the craftsmanship of “Music Box” manifests not only Folio’s musical interpretation of Albertine’s craftsmanship, but a vision shared by the two women. Together, they tell the age-old story of family drama through one caretaker’s (presumably a mother’s) recollection of her own drama as a child and her premonition that her children will one day find themselves caught in the same cycle of drama as well.

Themes from the poem include infinity, perpetuation through cycles, and family. Using these themes as a guide, it is easy to discern how musical elements such as form, harmony, and texture help convey the ultimate metaphor of a cycle of family drama. In the following analysis, I will discuss how the form itself is a metaphor for the narrator’s changed perspective, how a Schenkerian-style background structure illustrates the metaphor of perpetuation, and how the text and surface level elements help tell the narrator’s story.

In the text, the narrator embodies two characters in one. While her narration reveals her later as a mother, she begins as a child in a distant memory. The opening text immediately portrays this ambiguity: in m. 4, the women sing, “You never knew...” while the men sing “...where it would start.” The singers are instructed to “repeat several times randomly; don’t coordinate with other members of the section,” creating a blur of sound within the whole tone collection.

Example 3.1

The musical score for Example 3.1 consists of five staves. The first four staves are vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The fifth staff is a piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. The first measure contains the lyrics "You ne - ver knew" for the Soprano and Alto parts. The second measure contains the lyrics "where it would start," for the Tenor and Bass parts. Performance instructions are provided in text boxes above and below the vocal staves. The piano accompaniment features triplet patterns in both the right and left hands.

Folio, “Music Box,” mm. 4-5

The focal metaphor in my analysis is the concept of maturity as a cycle which changes as it comes around; that is, the same ideas recur with modifications but never return in their original presentation. The cycle is different at its end from its beginning. An overview of the musical form and the narrative strongly delineates this metaphor of maturity. The form is heavily shaped by the narrative in the text, showing a journey

around a tonal center as opposed to a common-practice form that shows a functional progression *in* a key center. In “Music Box,” the beginning and ending of the piece resemble a caterpillar which becomes a butterfly; the ending tonality is like the tonality in the beginning, but it has been irreversibly transformed over the course of the piece.

Musical Form

I am going to begin by discussing how the musical form in “Music Box” is projected by text and texture. The form reinforces a grave theme in the text: while the mother may vividly recall her childhood, her memory will always be tainted by her discernment. She can still wonder at the magic of the music box, but she can’t dissociate it from the tension of the family drama that has cycled for generations, the tension that will certainly taint the lives of her own children. It is Grandfather’s fault that the music box doesn’t work anymore. Like the damaged music box mechanism, the damaged family is doomed to continue hanging on to the sorrows of the past.

Figure 3.1: Form Chart

Section
Introduction (mm. 1-7)
A (mm. 8-28)
B (mm. 31-35a)
C (mm. 35b-41)
Introduction’ (mm. 42-43)
A’ (mm. 44-61)
B’ (mm. 62-77a)
C’ (mm. 77b-91a)
Chrysalis (mm. 91b-113)
Conclusion (mm. 114-129)

The way that the music matures is what strongly establishes the femininity of this piece. Maturation is a prominent theme in the text, as the narrator reflects on childhood

memories and looks ahead to what the future holds. She understands that what happened in the past will permeate the future, but the memories will lack the same happy ignorance of childhood. The A', B', and C' sections (see Figure 3.1) are neither identical to nor harmonically the same as their earlier counterparts, a compositional choice that reinforces the theme of maturation. They have similar motives and melodies to the preceding A, B, and C sections, but they are altered in numerous ways. The form map of "Music Box" is anchored more in motivic relations, text narrative, and changes in texture than harmonic progression, because the harmonic progressions are not the conventional common-practice ones.

The A and A' sections are the blurriest sections; they are almost completely aleatoric. The choir articulates the text once homophonically, but the intelligibility of the text is then obscured as each choir member repeats the text out of sync with the others. Each aleatoric section is followed immediately by B sections, where the voices sing mostly homophonically. In the B sections, the left hand part of the piano accompaniment rotates like a turning mechanism inside a music box.

However, the relative clarity of the B sections is obscured by the hockets and clusters in the subsequent C sections (mm. 31-39 and the piano solo in mm. 77-90). For example, mm. 31-32 feature offset entrances in the vocal parts, symbolizing the music box starting to fall out of sync. The section comes to a halt after several dampened articulations of the note A, played by the piano with non-escapement technique. The vocal parts in mm. 33-35 feature clusters of major seconds within each part, harkening to the sour notes in the broken music box. The hocket in mm. 36-39 (boxed in green in figure 3) also calls to mind a music box falling out of sync.

Example 3.2

37

S. es cape... and hang in our ears...
A. es cape... and hang in our ears...
T. lop-sid-ed in our ears...
B. lop-sid-ed in our ears...

70

S. or break the glass... or pry it up...
A. or break the glass... or pry it up...
T. or pry it up...
B. or pry it up...

Folio, "Music Box," mm. 37-41 and mm. 70-72

If the narrator hopes for another chance to hear the music box's tune after m. 39, her only option is to begin winding the box again. The aleatoric vocal entrances in mm. 42-43 harken back to the beginning of the piece, where the narrator is optimistic about the music box. Likewise, mm. 44-76 feature the voices singing mostly in homophony, just like in mm. 3-30. The piano churns beneath the voices, spinning fervently. However, the music box is doomed to fail again.

The C' section (71b-91a) has a tangibly different texture from its sister C section in mm. 31-39: unlike the earlier material, C' doesn't feature the choir. The piano plays a topsy-turvy version of a favorite children's song, but it is broken. Gestures in the piano melody parallel the hocket in mm. 36-39. The hocket is more pronounced in the first example, but its essence is present in the second.

Just like the section it parallels, however, the piano solo in the C' section is doomed to fall out of sync. The music box doesn't work, and the narrator soon explains why. The second C section is more broken than its corresponding section.

In mm. 95-118, the text reveals the narrator's realization that the music box will never work properly again, no matter how many times she winds it; this is a revelation in the narrative, and the narrator will never again remember the music box or her family the same way after. C-sharp minor is the tonality of the, shall we say, "chrysalis" section.

Example 3.3

92

S. Old box I could still smell to - bac - co

A. Old; p box I could still smell to - bac - co

T. *p* oo Old box I could still smell to - bac - co

B. *p* oo Old box still smell to - bac - co

Folio, "Music Box," mm. 92-98

In this section, the tempo slows down and the rhythm follows the syllabic emphasis of the text; the music is conducive for storytelling. In the text, the narrator examines the old music box to see if she can determine why it no longer works properly. She finds a piece of her grandfather's tobacco wedged in between the cogs of the music box. Metaphorically, this means that what he and other older family members did years ago has affected her and future generations.

The concluding material in mm. 119-128 emerges slowly from the chrysalis section, like a butterfly crawling out of its cocoon. Rather than ending the piece with a dramatic release of tension, Folio allows the tonal center of C-sharp minor to gradually simmer down into a tonal center of A. This does not leave the conclusion of the piece without drama, however; by the end of the piece, the voices oscillate out of time on open fifths between A and E, and G and D. On top of that, the choir is holding physical music

boxes, which are turning and playing out of time or tune with one another. The effect in performance is one of foggy resignation. The piece doesn't feel like it comes to a concrete finish because neither the text nor the formal narrative provides a satisfactory resting place.

Example 3.4

The musical score for Example 3.4 consists of five staves. The top four staves are for vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The fifth staff is for the piano accompaniment. The score begins at measure 127 with a *dim.* marking. Each vocal part has the lyrics "ma dra - - ma dra". Above each vocal staff, there is a box containing the instruction "repeat several times, staggering entrances, fade out before music boxes fade". At the end of each vocal staff, there is a box containing the instruction "stay still until music boxes fade". The piano accompaniment staff also has a *dim.* marking at the beginning and a box at the end with the instruction "stay still until music boxes fade".

Folio, "Music Box," mm. 127-129

Schenkerian Analysis of "Music Box"

The narrator's perception of both past and future is blurred, a peculiarity which permeates the music from the background all the way to the surface details.

Figure 3.2

A: I iii vi I iii I a: iii vi iii i

Figure 3.2: Schenkerian background for “Music Box”

This background sketch shows a beginning in A major, but the piece concludes with open fifths between A and E, and G and D. The harmony in between floats from C minor to C major to C-sharp minor, metaphorically obscuring any semblance of a typical harmonic progression and instead laying the groundwork for an evolution.

One of the most striking features of the background sketch is the unconventional shape of the *Urlinie*. In a way, it’s not quite an *Urlinie*. The prolonged salient tones show a descent of a tritone from A to E-flat, then a descent from A to E clustered with D. The shape of the *Urlinie* can be described as an off-kilter rotation. The repeated but modified descent in the shape mimics the modified repetitions of sections in the form; even at the background level, the metaphor of maturity as a cycle which transforms as it comes around shines through.

The relationship between the A and E-flat in mm. 1-42 and the A and E natural in mm. 71-128 illustrates the metaphor in the piece in terms of resolution of dissonance. A descending to E-flat is a tritone, while the A descending to E-natural is a perfect fourth.

This perhaps suggests that there is a gap between what the narrator remembers versus what actually happened; the essential events are there, but the way that the event emotionally affects her has changed over time.

The background sketch not only evokes the image of the broken music box, but it highlights salient surface level details. The final chord of the background with its clustered fourths and fifths resembles the clusters which appear in the piano accompaniment at mm. 7-9 and 48-50; these parallel sections are important moments in the larger form of the piece as well, and the tension they hold moves the action along in both the music and the text.

Example 3.5

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Music Box" by Folio, measures 6-9. It features four vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.), along with a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "You lift the lid. Some-thing rasps some-thing rasps some-thing rasps". The score includes performance markings such as "In tempo, but with rubato", "f", and "poco accel.". A green box highlights a specific passage in the piano accompaniment, which consists of a series of chords with clustered fourths and fifths.

Folio, "Music Box," mm. 6-9

Other aspects of the pitch detail evoke strong images in support of the text: notice that the men's parts and women's parts in m. 4 start from a common enharmonic tone,

but deviate in different directions; the women sing D-flat to E-flat to F to A, while the men sing C-sharp to B to A to F. The intervallic successions mirror one another perfectly, foreshadowing the theme of reflection that follows in the piece. A similar phenomenon occurs later in mm. 42-43, when the narrator recalls the moment when she is moved into action.

Example 3.6

2

4

S. Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with altos or with other members of the soprano section. Tenors & basses: "where it would start"; continue repeating previous bar.
 You ne - ver knew

A. Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with sopranos or with other members of the alto section. Tenors & basses: "where it would start"; continue repeating previous bar.
 You ne - ver knew

T. Sopranos & altos: "You never knew"; continue repeating previous bar. Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with other sections or with other members of the tenor section.
 where it would start,

B. Sopranos & altos: "You never knew"; continue repeating previous bar. Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with other sections or with other members of the bass section.
 where it would start,

3 3 3

Example 3.6 (Continued)

The musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves are for vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The bottom staff is for piano accompaniment. The score is marked with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 90$ and includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *p*. Performance instructions are provided in text boxes above the vocal staves, including: "Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with altos or with other members of the soprano section.", "Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with sopranos or with other members of the alto section.", "Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with other sections or with other members of the tenor section.", and "Repeat several times randomly; don't coordinate with other sections or with other members of the bass section.". Specific performance directions for the vocalists include "Tenors & basses: 'press with bare finger'; continue repeating previous bar, but mezzo piano" and "press with bare fin - ger". The lyrics "Or bet-ter still" and "right down on that pin" are written below the vocal staves. The piano accompaniment features triplet patterns and is marked with *f* and *sim.* (simile).

Folio, "Music Box," mm. 4-5 and mm. 42-44

Already, the text and music evoke several metaphors, of which reflection and recurrence are arguably the two most foundational. From those two metaphors emerges the theme of an offset rotation, a cycle which is altered as it comes around again. After all, the prominent McGuffin in the text is a music box, damaged unintentionally by Grandfather a long time ago. It still plays, but the tune has some sour notes, just like the narrator's recollection, where she remembers the events but now recognizes the trauma. The tune is present and the story still has the same facts, but neither is pristine.

Concluding Thoughts:

In this analysis, I used a combination of literary analysis and modified music theory tools to explore the narrative in Folio's composition and show how it permeates the piece at many levels. In a broad sense, the formal analysis tells the story of metamorphosis as a cycle by showing how analogous sections evolve as the piece takes its course. On the surface level, changes in texture and motives act as madrigalisms, painting the text and the ideas behind it. At the background, a Schenkerian graph shows how the image of a cycle in the narrative is present at the deepest level.

There are two main ideas in the piece: the first has to do with where the narrator belongs in her family's story; the second with her personal maturation story. While there are universal messages in her story, however, it is crucial to acknowledge that it is at the same time unique. Therefore, the analytic tools used in my account, which have longstanding utility for common-practice tonal music, have been modified to tell her story. The texture ranges from traditional homophonic part writing to aleatoric guided improvisation. The background bass line shows a non-traditional harmonic underlay and an unclear destination, but it nevertheless has direction. Both the direction and the unclear destination, as well as the various surface textures, play roles in the expression of repeating experience that is perceived differently as the perceiver matures.

CHAPTER V

SUMMING IT ALL UP

Using Schenkerian analysis and other types of reductive analyses to show metaphor in music has been a common practice for a while now. The metaphors in feminine music are often pronounced and complex, making a Schenkerian-style reduction, with its multiple levels, a conducive tool for exploring the relationship between structure and meaning. While the goal-oriented restriction of traditional Schenkerian analysis might retract from the strength of a reduction of a feminine piece, though not in the case where the feminine piece is itself goal-oriented such as Vandervelde's *Genesis II*, I believe constructing the analysis on the basis of different rules, such as salience, can be a helpful tool for extracting and illustrating the musical metaphor.

In my thesis, I have described analyses of iconic pieces by women composers in the twentieth century and contribute my own analyses using modified reductive analysis. I also analyzed one piece from the twenty-first century, Cynthia Folio's "Music Box," which is not as well known and for which there isn't an existing analysis.

The analysis of Yanika Vandervelde's *Genesis II* is a pioneer case study in the feminist movement in music theory. In 1987, Susan McClary presented the piece as an example of music which doesn't follow the traditional harmonic structure of common practice music, and thus she calls for readers to consider alternative methods of analyses for analyzing and appreciating the piece.

By carefully adjusting the rules of Schenkerian analysis to graph the prolongation of salient tones instead of harmonically structural tones, I showed a fluid structure in the piece, which represents the various stages of childbirth and growth of the child.

Libby Larsen's *Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth* is a keystone work in the output of one of America's most prolific composers. My analysis of the "Introit" shows a marriage of two different methods of analysis: circle of fifths progressions and modified Schenkerian analysis. Both methods show the importance of the circle metaphor in the piece, and portray the central metaphor of circles on different levels expressed in Wendell Berry's text.

My analysis of Cynthia Folio's "Music Box" demonstrates how Schenkerian analysis can be used to illustrate the harmonic structure of a piece which has an atypical harmonic structure. The analysis shows that the harmonic structure is tailored to the text, rather than a common practice harmonic model. It expresses well the idea of a recurring experience (looking at the music box), which is perceived differently as the perceiver matures.

Most importantly, in this paper I've shown how Schenkerian analysis can be a useful tool for portraying the narrative in a piece of feminine music. All of the pieces in my study come with a story; while a basic image might inherent in each story, the clear unfolding of a fairly detailed narrative is present in each, and it is remarkable how the background structures portray the action within those narratives. Hopefully, as scholars continue to analyze feminine music, they will not ignore modified Schenkerian analysis as a tool to represent multi-leveled dramatic narratives.

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