Janet Schmalfeldt. 2011. *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music.* New York: Oxford University Press.

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Classical form has again become a central topic in contemporary music-theoretical discourse largely due to the recent publication of two major treatises on the subject, namely William E. Caplin's *Classical Form* (1998) and James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory* (2006). These theoretical titans exemplify, in some ways, two contrasting conceptions of form. While Caplin concerns himself with the ways that sections relate to each other functionally (specifically referring to the importance of harmonies and cadences), Hepokoski and Darcy take a "dialogic" approach, comparing any given sonata (particularly the size, content, and punctuations of sections) with a sort of idealized version of the sonata form. Yet, both theories lack a fully worked out account of time and the emergence of the sonata movement's sections for a listener, in most cases contenting themselves with identifying sections and examining their relationships to other sections.

In *In the Process of Becoming: Analytical and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music*, Janet Schmalfeldt develops a theory of form as a process: the form of the work *is* the development of formal functions in our perception of the piece. Her book expands the processual form theory first laid out in her analysis of Beethoven's "Tempest" sonata (1995), based on the analysis of Carl Dahlhaus. In his analysis, Dahlhaus argues that to try to classify the opening measures of the "Tempest" sonata (where is the main theme?) is ultimately a fruitless enterprise.

> The argument as to whether the 'real' first subject is stated at the opening of the movement . . . or in bars 21 ff. is a waste of time; it requires a decision when the whole point is that decision is impossible, and ambiguity should be understood as an aesthetic quality . . . Nearly all the formal sections occupy a twilight world, in which it is difficult or impossible to make unequivocal pronouncements about their functions . . . The beginning of the movement [m. 1] is not yet a subject, the evolutionary episode [m. 21 ff] is one no longer. (Dahlhaus 1991:169–170)

Schmalfeldt seizes upon this last, oft quoted, sentence in her extension of Dahlhaus's analysis. She sees the formal functions emerging as the process itself. The formal unit, if we must find one, is the span during which this

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process occurs. Schmalfeldt uses the symbol "⇒ " in her analytical overlays between two formal designations to show "becoming." Thus, mm. 1–22 of the sonata are labeled "Intro. ⇒ MT," which is read, "introduction becomes main theme" (Schmalfeldt 2011:38–41).

Schmalfeldt places her project within what she calls the "Beethoven-Hegelian tradition," taken from Theodor Adorno's understanding of Beethoven's music as essentially Hegelian (29–32). Hegel's metaphysics is known for its use of the dialectic method. Overall, this method is a series of integrations of ideas and their negations that ultimately give rise to the totality of the world or "the Whole," being the eventual integration of everything.[1] In this method, an idea is given, which necessarily gives rise to its negation. The given, discrete idea, which starts the dialectic process (e.g., "being," "finite," or "unity"), if it is anything less than "the Whole," possesses conceptual borders; that is, in understanding the concept one must understand its limits. But if there are limits to a concept, then there must be something beyond those limits: there must be something other than the concept under discussion—this is the negation. Despite the negation necessarily being outside the idea, it is nevertheless definitively dependent on the idea, and the idea is dependent in the same way on the negation. That is, we know the idea by understanding its relationship to the negation and vice-versa. Because of the close relationship between the idea and the negation, and both being a part of the Whole, they become integrated into a new idea, a concept that includes *both* the idea and the negation. With this integrated new idea the dialectic process continues, defining new negations and new integrations until the Whole is completed (Redding 2010).

Adorno understands form in Beethoven's music as this kind of dialectic process. "[M]oments, taken individually," he claims, "seem to contradict each other. But therein lies the meaning of Beethovenian form as process." The form of the music is the constant "mediation" of these contradictions (Adorno 1994:35–36, cited in Schmalfeldt 2011:3–4).

Within this tradition, Schmalfeldt gives this aesthetic, metaphysical soul an analytic body. Her analyses often invoke Schenkerian ideas, but also incorporate her processual formal concepts.[2] Her method also borrows from both Caplin's and Hepokoski and Darcy's formal theories. From Caplin she takes the concept of formal functions (opposed to the "spaces" of Sonata Theory[3]), but she allows such functions more fluidity than Caplin (Schmalfeldt 2011:16–17). According to Schmalfeldt, when functions are defined too "rigidly," listeners become unable to acknowledge "genuine formal innovation" (17). From Hepokoski and Darcy, Schmalfeldt accepts the "dialogic" premise: that listeners understand form as a dialogue between historically-conditioned formal expectations and the instantiated music before their ears. Such a premise is necessary because there could be no sense of transformation (from one formal function to another) if there was no expectation for certain formal functions in the first place. Borrowing from both formal theories, Schmalfeldt significantly loosens their specific claims, allowing her to make use of the concepts without necessarily running into the complications arising for both of these theories in an overdetermined practice.

After laying out the shape and place of her project in the introductory first chapter, the rest of the book is a collection of relatively unconnected analytical essays, most of which show her dynamic formal system in action. She begins by reviewing her analysis of the "Tempest" sonata (chapter 2), including a new section on the relationship between her analysis and those of Caplin and Hepokoski (51–57).[4] She then shows the pre-Beethovenian history of processual form in the 18th century in analyses of Haydn, Clementi, and Mozart (chapter 3), followed by a new Beethoven analysis of the "Bridgetower" violin sonata, op. 47 (chapter 4).[5] In the "Bridgetower" analysis, Schmalfeldt shows not only the processual character of Beethoven's music (which became a staple after the middle period) but how, in this case, the process was based on the back-and-forth between artistic equals, the piano (Beethoven) and the violin (George Bridgetower) (Schmalfeldt 2011:92–94).

A central claim of Schmalfeldt's book is that the processual character of developing formal functions, and indeed the formal functions themselves, can be usefully applied beyond the Classical period.[6] Moving beyond Beethoven, Schmalfeldt presents several Schubert analyses and their relationship to performance (chapter 5).[7] Schmalfeldt argues on behalf of an analyst-performer—an analytically-minded pianist (in this case) whose analyses affect her performances, but also an analyst sensitive to performance practice and experience, whose analytical decisions are affected by performative aspects (unambiguously, Schmalfeldt herself) (114–115). Moreover, such a performer-analyst[8] recognizes the effect that particular performances have on a listener and such a person tries to communicate her analyses through performance (118). Continuing with Schubert's music, Schmalfeldt then examines "inward turning" secondary themes (chapter 6).[9] In the nineteenth century, self-realization, and, specifically, the self-realization of the composer in his music, became a central trope. Processual formal analyses, Schmalfeldt argues, foreground this concept (136). Her last overtly processual analyses are of Mendelssohn's music (chapter 7), arguing that while Mendelssohn and Mozart are often said in the same musicological breath (indeed, the chapter is titled "Mendelssohn the 'Mozartean'"), Mendelssohn's use of formal process is uniquely his own (136).

The final two essays deal less with processual form. In chapter 8, Schmalfeldt explores the "ascending-thirds" progression in Chopin's Cello Sonata, op. 65, arguing that the progression I–III–V in Chopin is so common that it becomes a "signature progression" (195). Finally, Schmalfeldt closes the book with her keynote address to the Society of Music Theory in 2003, reflecting on the concept of "homecoming" in analysis (chapter 9).

Schmalfeldt's analytical style foregrounds the listener and musical experience more than many other contemporary approaches to form. The final chapters explore music as it is experienced personally (in stunning prose, no less) as a listener, performer, or composer. Such an analytical method is invaluable, especially in formal analysis, because it allows the analyst some way to express her personal connection to the music in terms other than dry, predetermined, analytical categories (if other formal theories could be caricaturized as such). Further, by basing her analyses on listener/performer/analyst experience, Schmalfeldt's theory incorporates temporality into formal analysis. By considering the form not as an a priori division of the piece but as a process, Schmalfeldt steps closer to the way we *experience* music (especially in our first hearing). Musical experience itself is, after all, *not* given all at once, but is a process in time.

Schmalfeldt gains this temporal feature in her analysis by employing the concept of "becoming," which, in regular language, necessarily implies temporality ("at one *time* you have X which *later* becomes Y"). Moreover, bringing in a Hegelian sense of "Becoming" allows the analyst to synthesize formal functions in the style of Hegel's dialectic. In Hegelian dialectic, as described above, there is utter combination of the two terms that include each other from the start and transcend their original scopes. In the "Tempest" example above, the introduction function *always* has something of the character of the first-theme function and vice-versa.[10] But to ally the normal-language use of "becoming" with Hegel's concept of "Becoming" also brings much extra, metaphysical baggage into the theory. Few contemporary philosophers think that Hegel was right in his dialectic project, despite his importance for German idealism, matched only by Kant. Crucially, Hegel believed axiomatically that the Whole is totally and absolutely unified and that any sort of separation is impossible. And this necessary unity motivates the integration of ideas in the first place.[11] But, in assuming this inevitable unification, Hegel speciously side-steps any need to explain the mechanisms or motivations by which integration occurs: in his theory, the idea and negation do not integrate for some demonstrable purpose, but rather because they *must*, because the Whole *must* be unified by definition. Hegel's method therefore has an air of question-begging to it: the only motivation for its progress is assumed from the get go. For this reason, few philosophers after Hegel’s time have been convinced that the dialectical process is an accurate representation of reality.

Moreover, to incorporate a specifically Hegelian concept of Becoming does not actually bring in temporality as Hegel’s metaphysical dialectic is *outside of time*. In *Philosophy of Logic* (which is surprisingly absent from Schmalfeldt’s bibliography), Hegel argues that the integration of Being (idea) and Nothing (negation) into Becoming occurs not as a temporal process, but as a logical process. The idea is prior to the negation, which are both prior to the integration, *logically* and not *temporally*. In unifying Being and Nothing, Hegel says, “The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and nothing into being—*‘has passed over,’ not passes over*” (emphasis added; Hegel 1816 [2010], 59–60). Note the deliberate avoidance of an active noun—the synthesis is not happening over time or happening now, but *has* happened and now (in time) the synthesis is more or less utter and stable. Further, in his first Remark of this section, Hegel gently chides Greeks and Buddhists for placing the integration in time. He compliments their ability to “express at bottom the same unity of being and nothing. But,” he goes on, “these expressions have a substrate in which the transition takes place; being and nothing [represented by life and death] are *held apart in time*, presented as alternating in it; they are not thought in their abstractions and also, therefore, not so that they are the same in and for themselves” (emphasis added; 60). Thus, a “real” Hegelian, conceptual synthesis cannot take place if it occurs in time; the elements cannot be “held apart;” instead everything happens, and is given, all at once. Such a logical process can have an analog in time—as Hegel’s world history does, moving from Being as China to the culmination of all civilization in the Prussian state (Russell 2007 [1945]:735)—but even here, Hegel sees time as an illusion, because we are incapable of perceiving the always-existing, immutable Whole (Ibid.).

Taking such an idealistic, metaphysical stance when approaching form begins to steer us away from musical experience, and indeed the pieces themselves that draw us, as analysts, into music scholarship in the first place. By appealing to musical experience and not a “Beethoven-Hegelian” tradition, I think we can retain many of Schmalfeldt’s achievements in her personal encounters with music through listening and performing. In fact, excising the Hegelian sense of Becoming allows her analyses to exist in time and therefore better model musical experience of forms, unfolding occurrently throughout the composition. If instead we refer to the “everyday language” sense of “becoming,” we preserve the temporal identity of processual formal functions (i.e., formal designations that utilize “⇒ ”).

Of course, Schmalfeldt's invocation of Hegel is not needless. Beethoven and Hegel, born in the same year, lived in more or less the same time and place. It therefore makes historical sense to try to approach Beethoven's music with a method informed by Beethoven's world, particularly if one values rooting analysis in history.[12] Moreover, integration like Hegel's allows for maximally-unified formal functions: the functions are completely unified and always have been unified. But, as I argued above, in rejecting a Hegelian metaphysical framework one is able to step closer to an experience-based analytical method, which I take to be the most important part of Schmalfeldt's project. The cost is the sense of total synthesis of the two formal functions, but a listener does not experience those forms as a complete integration of functions anyway. Though a total synthesis gives one a convenient label for a section, it does not capture the sense of *changing* formal functions. One starts thinking that one has one formal function (in the case of the "Tempest" sonata, a slow introduction in m. 1), which is *then* complicated when the form does not progress as we expect it to. In the end, it is *this* sense of "becoming," not the maximally-unified Hegelian sense, which models our experience of processual formal features. In Hegel's philosophy, there is room for interpretation, and it might be possible to read him in such a way as to have it both ways—to retain temporality while gaining maximally-unified functions. But I do not really see a good reason for such an interpretation. I do not (usually) experience formal functions as totally unified, but rather as processes, transforming from one into the other. Under retrospective reinterpretation, one might see how a formal function might lay the groundwork for becoming another function (Martin and Moortelle 2011), but this really only enters into our thought when looking back on the piece, when doing the analysis, and usually not when we are listening to the music unfold in time.

Despite these departures of Hegelian metaphysics from an experience-based analytical method, Schmalfeldt's analytical method helps to further bring musical experience into the sometimes-antiseptic world of formal analysis, a great achievement for any kind of music theory.[13]

Notes

1. In my overview of the Hegelian dialectic, I use the triad idea–negation–integration to stand in for the "traditional" thesis–antithesis–synthesis.
2. In lieu of Schenkerian voice–leading graphs, Schmalfeldt often gives full scores with formal markings and surface–level Schenkerian symbols.
3. In Hepokoski and Darcy's theory sonatas are analyzed into spaces, defined usually by strong cadences. The sonata itself occurs in "sonata–space" which includes the standard exposition–development–recapitulation scheme. Expositional space is divided into P–space (primary theme), S–space (secondary theme), etc. Spaces broadly refer to a span of measures wherein some feature of

a sonata takes place (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 281).

4. Originally published as Schmalfeldt 1995. For form–functional and Sonata Theory analyses of the "Tempest" sonata see Caplin 2009 and Hepokoski 2009.

5. More commonly referred to as the "Kreutzer" sonata, Schmalfeldt uses the name "Bridgetower" presumably to highlight the important role of the violinist to the piece's composition.

6. Note that in both Caplin's and Hepokoski and Darcy's theories they limit themselves to "the instrumental music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven" and the "late eighteenth century" (respectively).

7. This chapter was originally published as an article. See Schmalfeldt 2003.

8. N.B., inversion of terms is deliberate.

9. This chapter in an expansion on a previously given address at the Sixth Conference of the Dutch Society for Music Theory, in Utrecht, February 20th, 2004.

10. Nathan Martin and Steven Moortele even suggest using a "⇔ " between formal–functional labels, thus showing the dependence of the first element on the second, just as much as the second is dependent upon the first. (Martin and Vande Moortele 2011).

11. Russell and others identify this as Hegel's "mystical" axiom which he seems to have arrived at intuitively (Russell 1945 [2007], 731).

12. This is more or less the point Richard Taruskin recently re–stated in Music Theory Spectrum, which was met by varied and lukewarm responses from the music theory community (Taruskin 2011).

13. Of course, this preference to defer to musical experience is in line with methods of experience–based analysis. See for instance Dubiel 2010 or Guck 2006.

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