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## SYSTEMATIC MUSICOLOGY RECONSIDERED

William Hutchinson

That all forms of musicology should be systematic, that is, rigorous or *wissenschaftliche*, goes without question. That one part of musicology, because of its particular goals, should be specified as “systematic” continues to be, however, controversial. Arguments for a distinct systematic musicology have grown remarkably in persuasiveness and example in recent years. Yet uncertainty, conflicting terminology, and concern about the possibility and appropriateness of a specifically systematic orientation within musicology have restrained the development of what many feel to be a valid and productive segment of modern musicology.

Descriptions and definitions of systematic musicology have appeared in a variety of contexts. Some are propaedeutic, directed to the creation, clarification, implementation, or maturation of the field. Others occur as descriptive information; that is, they are designed to extend awareness of existing practice and terminology. A third type is found within research reportage itself, wherein acquired information is classified as systematic in its relation to data presented in other contexts.

What is the general thrust of these descriptions and definitions? What is their meaning for current musicology, in which, as Louis Harap aptly put it nearly four decades ago, research goes on “irrespective of the names by which it is called”?<sup>1</sup> In the discussion that follows, the principal sources on systematic musicology have been reviewed under headings suggested by common emphases within these sources—namely, systematic musicology as:

(1) a comprehensive theoretical science of music; (2) selected interdisciplinary study of music; and (3) a correlative epistemological orientation within musicology.

### *I. Systematic Musicology: A Comprehensive Theoretical Science of Music*

A tendency to conceptualize scholarly research as divisible into theoretical and historical branches is evident in the methodological writings on many disciplines. A similar tendency appears rather consistently in the prescriptive writings on systematic musicology.<sup>2</sup> Among those who advocate a theoretical emphasis as the heart of systematic musicology,

theory is most frequently viewed as the construction of models based upon the data of music history. The first emphasis upon the empiricism of music history is found in Adler, writing in 1885: "The second principal division [after history] of musicology is the systematic one; it is based upon the historical division."<sup>3</sup> One must ask how a specifically systematic theory of music would differ from knowledge of music as it is advanced through historical study. Here a crucial distinction is suggested; the data proposed as the base for theory are to be restricted to "überhistorische" data, that is, historical information broader in scope than that defined by single historical epochs, styles, and traditions. Wiora suggests:

The goal of systematic scholarship is "supra-historical" knowledge; the danger is arriving at nonhistorical generalizations. The "supra-temporal" that it investigates is not "nontemporal," but only of long duration.<sup>4</sup>

A synoptic view of the sources suggests the following: The theoretical science of music posited as systematic musicology rests upon the particulars of history but seeks to identify and study those phenomena that are evidenced in more than one historical or cultural tradition. Its scope is worldwide and includes the music of today. Its theoretical formulations are "open-ended," that is, they are to be revised and augmented as additional evidence of musical practice, both contemporaneous and historically reconstructed, becomes available for observation. The concept that emerges is less simple than the separate and equal polarization of a *historische und systematische Musikwissenschaft* initially conceived by Adler. The discrimination and ordering—the systematization—of the common musical practices of any era are taken in most of the more recent literature on systematic musicology to be a concomitant or subsequent product of a full historical documentation. It is the broader categories and characteristics of music, drawn systematically but freely from the totality of history, that are proposed as the province of a specifically systematic theory of music. The prescriptive writings for a comprehensive theory of music as a systematic emphasis within musicology view the present research-derived knowledge of music—principally historical—as parallel to the observation and classification of data characteristic of any science, humanistic or other, in its natural-history stage. The proposal of those who stress a comprehensive theory of music as systematic musicology is that the present size of these data is sufficient for, and instigative of, additional and more generally embracing formal classification.

## II. *Systematic Musicology: Selected Interdisciplinary Study of Music*

Charles Seeger's conception of a comprehensive, systematic theory of music is broader than what we have considered so far and leads to a discussion of a second principal emphasis held to be systematic musicology: the interdisciplinary study of music. For Seeger, the core of the systematic orientation is:

the systematic study of the particular tradition (or traditions) of which the student is a carrier (or has the equivalence in knowledge). . . . There can be no substitute for the accurate description of a music idiom known first hand by the student.<sup>5</sup>

However, for Seeger, the comprehensive study of systematic musicology is fully achieved only through the integration of the above-discussed emphasis with physical, physiological, psychological, and other "external"—for example, religious—views of the factual and valuative aspects of music phenomena. Just as the comprehensive study of music history is achieved (for Seeger) in the integration of its materials with general history, so a full systematic emphasis occurs as music phenomena are interrelated with knowledge of their existence gained from perspectives often thought to be external to the study of music. Thereby one moves into a second common theme in the sources focused upon systematic musicology: the clustering and integration of the acoustics, physiology, psychology, aesthetics, and (occasionally) the sociology of music as one of its principal divisions.

In discussions of the role interdisciplinary studies play in systematic musicology, acoustics, physiology, and experimental psychology are commonly separated as contributory, auxiliary sciences. Dräger holds the laboratory sciences to be secondary, in the "service of the proper goal of systematic musicology: knowledge of music in its psychological effect and in its esthetic worth."<sup>6</sup> Husmann considers the subject of systematic musicology to be the answer to the question "how the objective, given factors of the properties of music (frequency, intensity, and complexity of vibrations) are realized in subjective-emotionality [*Subjektiv-Seelischen*]."<sup>7</sup> Contrary to the impression given by a casual overview of the bulk and proportions of those introductions to musicology that emphasize a systematic musicology,<sup>8</sup> the laboratory sciences occupy a somewhat peripheral role,<sup>9</sup> one that is subsidiary but contributory to the development of knowledge of music perception and, beyond, of the common properties of musical experience itself. Without denying the significant role that musical data have played and may play in the future in the development of knowledge of importance to the external disciplines, the focus is upon information descriptive of or about music.



In addition to an emphasis upon tone- and music-psychology—variously and in considerable detail distinguished and interrelated in the literature—two other interdisciplinary concentrations are commonly located within systematic musicology. Most constant is the inclusion of the esthetics of music as a principal and substantially independent division. The other interdisciplinary focus that is associated with systematic musicology, but only occasionally, is the sociology of music. The definition of a specific and independent music sociology appears to be yet in flux; for Engel the sociology of music is a “new, scarcely begun discipline;”<sup>10</sup> for Weltek, an “until now quite feeble little plant [*einem bisher noch recht schwachlichen Pflänzchen*].”<sup>11</sup>

Wiora’s overview of the interdisciplinary aspects of systematic musicology is perhaps the most comprehensive:

Some of its [systematic musicology’s] branches reach out to neighboring sciences and have been especially embraced by those scholars who are fully grounded in both disciplines while yet having their principal basis in one or the other. Examples are Carl Stumpf, von Hornbostel, Kurt Huber, Albert Weltek. This is possible in music psychology, as well as in musicological acoustics and basic research in the natural sciences in general, and in music sociology and music philosophy. Other themes are dealt with by researchers who concentrate primarily on musicology and turn toward neighboring disciplines only as subsidiary subjects, without requiring an express union of interdisciplinary skills within one individual discipline; this form is customary in musicology as it is represented in the universities.<sup>12</sup>

### *III. Systematic Musicology: A Correlative Epistemological Orientation*

One finds in the literature on systematic musicology a sometimes stated, sometimes unstated assumption that history and system describe epistemological polarities; that is, that they are alternative modes of knowledge acquisition. In this context neither “history” nor “system” is equated with a specific discipline—history, science, etc.; their referents are alternative modes of information selection and organization, modes that may be variously integrated and emphasized in any discipline or single endeavor.

An early statement of the general interrelation of the musicological and epistemological usage of the terms “history” and “system” was provided by Seeger in 1939:

The first step, it seems to me, is to . . . speak of a musicology as one study in which two *orientations* are possible—a systematic and an

historical. . . . We must discuss this matter in a general way as well as in the particular form in which we know it in musicology, for it is indeed a general phenomenon and appears in every field from physics and biology to sociology and philosophy, including musicology.<sup>13</sup>

The specific relevance to musicology of these two modes is pointed out by Wiora:

History and System are not solely to be distinguished as separate subjects or fields. They are also . . . set forth as subdivisions of disciplines. Their interweaving or intersection is evidenced in music-ethnology and in numerous investigations concerned with recent and contemporary Western history, e. g., the clarification of the concept of tonality. One might recall here a long list of publications, e.g., those of Ernst Kurth on Bach. . . . In all the humanistic and social sciences a developing historical consciousness has had its effect not only on specifically historical research, but also on concepts of the nature of things and of universals in particulars.<sup>14</sup>

The general, broad, stream of literature that delineates, from an epistemological base, historical and systematic orientations also spells out a desirable integration or interrelation of historically and systematically gained information. Again, the parallel from the broader discipline to musicology holds in writings descriptive of systematic musicology. Information of a systematic nature, say, of musical perception, social context, or aesthetic significance, is taken to be nondeterministic, that is, not prescriptive of music and musical experience. The literature on systematic musicology holds, however, that music and musical experience are not independent of such facts, that perceptual, social, and evaluative characteristics are best viewed and classified through multi-cultural or multihistorical observation, and that the interrelationship of historical information with such systematic information will lend to history a complementary perspective, a frame within which each individuality will be more objectively identified. Thus one finds a stress upon the need for the integration of systematic information in the sum of historical writings.

Conversely, the literature holds that documentations of a solely historical nature cannot claim valid vocabularies or methodologies for interrelation and comparison, but that such documentations nevertheless represent the only realities in music and musical experience, and therefore cannot be ignored in systematic studies without reducing the systematic study to "empty rubrics."<sup>15</sup>

\* \* \*

It is reasonable to expect that a close scrutiny of a relatively compact and unified literature will uncover a central theme, emphasis, or point of view. An examination of the sources descriptive of a systematic musicology does to some extent fulfill that expectation: systematic musicology seeks to provide knowledge of those regularities within which musical life occurs; it will seek to construct models, integrating both historical and experimental data, that describe the varied interrelationships of music with natural, psychological and social phenomena. But it is apparent that a comprehensive explication—a theory setting forth the full “scope, goals, and boundaries” of a specifically systematic emphasis within musicology—has yet to appear. That this is so may be the result of the relative fewness of those who have been substantially identified with the field and the even smaller number who have viewed its writings comprehensively. Additional factors are the broad temporal and geographic spans of contributions to the field, its multiple and evolving aspects, and what may well have been the inappropriateness, because of incomplete resources, of a truly systematic orientation early in the development of musicology.

The following points touch upon the more obvious problem-issues that require continuing discussion:

1. An *überhistorische* theory of music finds its base in musical phenomena present in diverse cultures and epochs. The goal evidenced in the writings on systematic musicology is the discrimination of continuing but not necessarily omnipresent musical structures and contexts. The assumption is that the extracultural and extratemporal significance of such relatively enduring musical characteristics will effectively complement and enhance information drawn solely from the isolated “islands” of musical history and culture. At the moment, writings on the nature of an *überhistorische* theory of music tend to be more propaedeutic than assessments of present achievement, although substantial evidence is offered, such as, for example, the pervasiveness of the structure of the strophic song, and the gradual encircling of the globe by Western music.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, one finds evidence in such fields as esthetics and ethnomusicology of increased concern for knowledge of the repetitive aspects of musical expression and experience.

2. The incorporation into musicology of laboratory data, even under the guise of ancillary information, tends to obscure the humanistic base and objectives of musicology. Without the presence of a rigorous methodology, emphasis is easily deflected toward alleged natural characteristics for music and musical life. It is rather the relationship between natural phenomena and musical phenomena that must itself be placed

in question,<sup>17</sup> thereby accommodating physical, physiological, and psychological views of music and musical experience as frames of reference or “regularities”<sup>18</sup> that may facilitate a more complete understanding of the protean structurings of music and musical context.

3. Similarly, tone- and music-psychologies tend to focus upon a limited segment of musical experience, namely, response to tonal structures that lend themselves to laboratory control. Certainly “pure” or “absolute” music provides a rich territory for laboratory research, but a truly comprehensive psychology of music and musical experience must include substantial incorporations of nonmusical symbolisms, interrelations with other arts, functional instrumentalities, and so forth.

4. The methodologies and information that comprise the laboratory sciences are only with great difficulty accommodated in the already demanding training of the musicologist. It is nevertheless true that the significance for the study of music of psycho-acoustic information is best sensed and developed by the musician-musicologist. The same can be said with respect to the incorporation of methodologies and information from philosophy and sociology. Much of what has been claimed as systematic musicology cannot be faulted as failing to fulfill a systematic emphasis; a portion can however be alleged to have failed to be musicology.

5. The several uses of the word “systematic” in writings on systematic musicology are not wholly compatible. One usage is disadvantaged by the imprecision of a negative definition: that which is nonhistorical. Another usage is in reference to study of the present, divorced from historical meaning. A third is the larger epistemological meaning of “system,” which encompasses the general, the more enduring, that which is pervasive among particulars. Given the logical imprecision of the first usage (what is nonhistory? and how does one separate it from the “ahistorical”?), and the difficulty of fully adapting a synchronic orientation to an art so essentially evolutionary and dynamic in nature, it seems likely that it is the epistemological definition that is equipped to complement the evolution of a systematic emphasis within a humanistic discipline such as musicology.

6. One could well question the clustering under a single title of a comprehensive music theory, musical esthetics, tone- and music-psychology (together with their ancillary disciplines), and occasionally, the sociology of music. Hibberd has suggested that it would be best to reconsider some of these areas, to the extent that they fulfill musicological objectives, as “topical” studies within musicology.<sup>19</sup> Yet there appears to be a strong argument to both refine and encourage the general use of the

term "systematic." The emphases listed above are united in a quest for that which is general, comprehensive, pervasive, and enduring, objectives that are well characterized epistemologically as systematic. And, from a practical standpoint, if we can agree upon the need for an increase in interdisciplinary and methodological studies within all forms of musicology, major steps in that direction will be found in epistemological methodologies and vocabularies associated with the term "systematic,"<sup>20</sup> and in the substantial musicological literature that has appeared in recent years under the rubric "systematic."

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Louis Harap, "On the Nature of Musicology," *The Musical Quarterly* 23 (1937) p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> The pairing of "systematic" and "historical" is almost a constant in the literature on systematic musicology. A tripartite division occurs in Heinrich Husmann, *Einführung in die Musikwissenschaft* (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1958) p. 3, in which *historische*, *systematische*, and *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* comprise the musicological whole.

<sup>3</sup> Guido Adler, "Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1885) p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Wiora, "Das Musikalische Kunstwerk und die Systematische Musikwissenschaft," in *Deuxième Congrès International d'Esthétique et de Science de l'Art* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1937) p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Seeger, "Systematic Musicology: Viewpoints, Orientations, and Methods," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 4 (1951) p. 248.

<sup>6</sup> Hans-Heinz Dräger, "Musikwissenschaft," in *Universitas Litterarum: Handbuch der Wissenschaftskunde*, ed. Werner Schuder (Berlin: Gruyter, 1955) p. 642.

<sup>7</sup> Heinrich Husmann, *Einführung in die Musikwissenschaft* (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1958) p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Glen Haydon, *Introduction to Musicology* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941).

<sup>9</sup> Claude Palisca, *Musicology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall 1963) p. 99, points out that the quantity of information so imparted on acoustics, physiology and psychology may be the result of the necessity to convey elementary knowledge, rather than an indication of their preponderant role.

<sup>10</sup> Hans Engel, "Soziologie der Musik," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 12 (1965) col. 950.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Wellek, *Musikpsychologie und Musikästhetik: Grundriss der Systematischen Musikwissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1963) p. ix.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Wiora, "Albert Welleks 'Grundriss der Systematischen Musikwissenschaft' und die Verbindung von systematischen mit historischen Denken," *Die Musikforschung* 19 (1966) p. 252.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Seeger, "Systematic and Historical Orientations in Musicology," *Acta musicologica* 11 (1939) pp. 121-122.

<sup>14</sup> Wiora, "Albert Welleks 'Grundriss,'" p. 255.

<sup>15</sup> Wiora, "Die historische und die systematische Betrachtung der musikalischen Gattungen," *Deutsches Jahrbuch der Musikwissenschaft* 10 (1965) p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Wiora, "Albert Welleks 'Grundriss,'" p. 260.

<sup>17</sup> See Hans-Peter Reinecke, "Naturwissenschaftliche Grundlagen der Musikwissenschaft," in *Einführung in die systematische Musikwissenschaft*, ed. C. Dahlhaus (Cologne: Gerig, 1971) p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, "Ueber historische und systematische Musikwissenschaft," *Bericht über den internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bonn 1970* (1971) p. 621.

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd Hibberd, "Musicology Reconsidered," *Acta musicologica* 31 (1959) p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> For example, "systematism"—now more frequently "structuralism"—as it is defined in anthropology and linguistics; also the correlative distinction and integration of "diachronic" and "synchronic" method (Roman Jakobson, André Martinet, and others). For a discussion of the inadequacies (for musicology) of the distinction between nomothetic and idiographic method, see Carl Dahlhaus, "Musiktheorie," in *Einführung in die systematische Musikwissenschaft*, ed. C. Dahlhaus (Cologne: Gerig, 1971) pp. 127-128.

## WIT AND HUMOR IN TONAL SYNTAX

James C. Kidd

Humor in music continues to defy the apparent reasonableness of philosophical definitions which deny the very possibility of its existence. Why this should be so is puzzling. Abstract, non-verbal processes of implication tend to lack inherent possibilities of humor—one does not normally laugh at a game of chess or a mathematical solution—yet music is an analogous process in which experienced listeners recognize and respond to humor. This discussion is an attempt to elucidate certain facets of this curious phenomenon, using as its central example a particularly subtle and comprehensive use of wit and humor by Beethoven in the first movement of his piano sonata in F major, op. 54.

In theories about the nature of humor, the element of surprise is generally considered the most basic element. Surprise can take many forms (contradiction, juxtaposition, paradox, etc.), but it is an essential ingredient, from the lower comic forms to the highest flights of wit. In his article "Humor in Music," Henry F. Gilbert states that humor "arises from a juxtaposition of two elements which do not naturally or customarily go together; such as sudden and unexpected rhythmic effects, unusual harmonizations, queer intervallic successions, freak orchestrations, etc."<sup>1</sup>

This concise definition emphasizes the crucial role of surprise in musical humor, but read out of context and with its adjectives "unusual," "queer," and "freak" it could as easily be a description of a disagreeable new work by a conservative critic. I am temporarily using Gilbert's definition unfairly in order to emphasize the point that mere surprise is not a sufficient condition for the creation of musical humor, for there are many surprises in any single musical work. Leonard Meyer has shown in *Emotion and Meaning in Music*<sup>2</sup> that surprise and unexpectedness are cornerstones of serious esthetic response to music, forcing one to ask what is particular to that quality of surprise which generates humor in music.

Gilbert's definition of musical humor implies that a humorous musical effect must not only surprise the listener's expectations of where the music is going, but it must also contradict the normal expectations of what is stylistically appropriate, hence the adjectives "unusual," "queer," and "freak." This statement is circular without a fuller explanation of what is meant by "stylistically appropriate" in more precise terms related to the listener's response.

Most of the context of a musical work is taken for granted, just as one does not question that one is writing in prose. This means that with listen-

ing experience one continues to develop a “sense of style,” a largely subconscious familiarity with elements and processes. The listener tends to be aware of style only when something seems amiss, when an unusual element or procedure not heard before must be either interpreted somehow in terms of the style, or be judged a mistake.<sup>3</sup> The point is that, much like an obscure law, one is only consciously aware of “stylistic appropriateness” when it is challenged by unusual or abnormal procedures. How the listener instantaneously judges the “abnormality” of an effect is based on prior knowledge as well as a sense of the context, and it is a process as various as it is complicated. But the important result is that any musical effect which challenges the tacit norms of a style is potentially “wrong” until interpreted in a new light.

Thus the meaning of “stylistically appropriate” used in this discussion is a condition in which all elements and procedures contribute to a consistent and constant esthetic point of view, or what Arthur Koestler calls the “emotional climate.”<sup>4</sup> The basic esthetic point of view of most music is serious, and the listener expects that in any given work it will remain so, despite the amount of expressive contrast that occurs.

Contrasts in mood and expression must not be confused with the constancy of what has been designated the esthetic point of view of a work. For example, there is frequently a good deal of character contrast between the themes in a Classical sonata-form movement, but that does not affect the “serious” point of view of the movement as a whole. This same constancy in point of view is as clearly maintained in a light-hearted musical work (a category that Henry F. Gilbert nicely defines as “good-humored”<sup>5</sup>) as in a serious work. One’s sense of stylistic appropriateness would be just as jarred and offended if such a “good-humored” work suddenly “went serious.” An exception is a genre such as Mozartean opera whose norm is one of constant fluctuation between serious and comic points of view. Thus stylistic appropriateness has to do with how the musical elements present and reinforce the point of view from which the listener interprets them. Examples from the theater will help to clarify the point.

An audience in the presence of a great mime is astonished by the apparent reality of what it clearly knows are illusions—an invisible wall becomes palpable, and the mime is able to “walk” while standing in place. Illusion has a powerful fascination, and the mime must have total control of it, but there is another important element of fascination in mime, the constant aura of unexpectedness. The audience’s state of anticipation is not merely based on wondering what kind of illusion will be created next, but whether the illusions will be used for a serious or a comic point, for mime traditionally deals with both. The audience does not know in ad-



vance whether the point of view that will be projected is to be serious or comic. The esthetic point of view does not pre-exist as it does so often in legitimate theater—it is the only means available to the audience for interpreting what they are seeing, and the mime must generate it and control it strictly out of the material. It is this demand, having to generate a point of view out of the material (and sometimes the fluctuation and mixing of comic and tragic), that is the great challenge of the art and which raises it above the level of mere illusion.

In a related way, circus clowns sometimes use subtle, intimate gestures associated with mime, in addition to their normal repertoire of pratfalls and conventionally broad gestures. Part of the effectiveness of this practice lies in the unexpectedness of seeing circus clowns employing a style of gesture normally associated with mime. The unusual combination of styles adds a new dimension, suggesting depth and ambiguity, to the conventional circus clown image.

The esthetic point of view is usually less ambiguous in legitimate theater, which has not only categories (tragic and comic) but traditional styles of gesture associated with each. (Gesture is taken to mean not only physical motions but vocal inflections as well.) Those that are “appropriate” in a comic scene in Shakespeare would be completely out of place in a serious scene, and vice versa. In less traditional theater, a seemingly contradictory mixture of styles of gesture is used in a self-conscious way for a particular point, as in Brecht, and the audience realizes this from the context. But there are many conventions of stagecraft that come into play to help define and maintain the esthetic point of view, irrespective of the quality of the actors and the conceptual approach of the director.

An audience is usually quick to pick up clues which establish the point of view of the work they are attending to (whether music or drama), and the audience’s normal expectation, largely subconscious, is that this point of view will be maintained. Those signals and clues to interpretation which define and maintain the esthetic point of view are “stylistically appropriate,” whereas those which contradict the prevailing point of view are “stylistically inappropriate” unless or until they can be reconciled to the style, “proven innocent” as it were. If the norms of a style are contradicted too explicitly, the resulting effect may not be humorous but merely wrong, so that recognizing humor in music involves not only recognizing an unexpected turn of events but interpreting it as humorous in intent.<sup>6</sup> This process of recognition-and-interpretation is identical to the normal, serious listening process which must also deal with unexpected turns of events.

Since most musical wit and humor is produced with abstract, relational

procedures that are inherent and not extra-musical, it is reasonable to assume that their unexpectedness is created with the same procedures as serious ones, and based on the same set of expectations.

I have borrowed two major concepts to help clarify the question of how the listener swiftly judges when stylistic propriety, what I call the esthetic point of view, has been stretched for the sake of wit and humor without being violated or destroyed altogether. Much of the foregoing discussion of expectation and how it is informed by the listener's prior knowledge of the style, his familiarity with the stylistic "rules of the game," is indebted to Leonard Meyer's comprehensive discussion of it in his *Emotion and Meaning in Music*. Without the concept of expectation, the listener's sense of style cannot exist.

The second concept is from Arthur Koestler's discussion of the nature of humor in his *The Act of Creation*, that which he calls "bisociation."<sup>7</sup> Koestler explains that "I have coined the term 'bisociation' in order to make a distinction between the routine skills of thinking on a single 'plane,' as it were, and the creative act, which, as I shall try to show, always operates on more than one plane." He goes on to define this process of "bisociation" as "*the perceiving of a situation or idea . . . in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference . . .*"<sup>8</sup> This definition of "bisociation" goes one step further than Gilbert's definition of humor in music, based on "juxtaposition" of normally incompatible elements, by emphasizing the dual interpretation that must occur.

Professor Meyer has provided conceptual tools to explain how surprise and unexpectedness function in musical process, and Arthur Koestler's concept of "bisociation" applied to music helps to explain how the listener judges an effect to be serious, comic, or merely wrong.

In order for a musical consequent to be comic, it must contradict the esthetic point of view, or the stylistic proprieties, in two ways. First, it must contradict the normal range of possibilities expected by a knowledgeable listener. This mode of surprise and unexpectedness I call *structural*, being fooled by the syntax or the formal structure, or both. Secondly, it must contradict the sense of esthetic propriety, what Koestler calls the "emotional climate," the attitude of the listener which assumes esthetic sincerity, that the music is "saying what it means, and meaning what it says." This mode of surprise and unexpectedness I call *semantic*, denoting the recognizable changes in the "emotional climate" that affect the interpretive outlook. By definition, both modes of surprise, *structural* and *semantic*, must be present and interacting in order to produce a comic musical effect.

There are many examples of structural surprises which neither evoke amusement nor disturb the sense of esthetic point of view. (In fact, most

structural surprises reinforce it.) For example, the re-statement on B<sub>7</sub> of the opening phrase of Beethoven's *Waldstein* sonata is unpredictable and startling, yet it does not alter the serious emotional tone established at the beginning. In this case, the semantic mode of surprise remains unaffected by the structural mode of surprise, but generally, in the absence of structural surprise, there can be no semantic surprise unless it is triggered by extra-musical features or such things as a decided change in the tone of a text.

I suggest that how the semantic mode of surprise relates to structural surprise, how the listener recognizes changes of nuance in the "emotional climate" without access to extra-musical means, is an important key to understanding the nature of wit and humor in music. Koestler emphasizes that any example "can be converted from a comic into a tragic or purely intellectual experience, based on the same logical pattern . . . by a simple change of emotional climate."<sup>9</sup> The semantic mode is the important interpretive agent, controlling the listener's point of view. Meyer states that ". . . the designation of mood and character, whether accomplished in purely musical terms or with the aid of a program or text . . . is necessary for the proper understanding of the musical process in progress."<sup>10</sup> The interest in this discussion is focused on what Meyer calls "purely musical terms," those things in the context of the work that were referred to earlier as "clues" for the listener.

There is a basic drive in each listener to interpret what is being heard in a meaningful way, no matter how unusual or surprising, and it is the role of the semantic mode of surprise to fulfill this need. The practiced listener's ability to recognize stylistic irregularities is balanced by a desire to make sense of them when they seem to disturb the esthetic point of view. How else can one explain two common types of musical humor: a) an effect that is blatantly incorrect or contradictory in terms of the style (such as Haydn's "surprise" in his G major symphony) is quickly interpreted not as wrong but as comic; and, b) an effect that is subtly irregular in terms of the style, and that could easily be taken seriously, is instantaneously seen to be witty. These two types not only illustrate the flexible role of the semantic mode of surprise in "explaining" irregularities, they also suggest a general distinction that can be made between wit and humor in music.

Thus far, I have not made a distinction between wit and humor, wishing first to emphasize that both are produced in music with the same procedures in the mode of structural surprise—their difference is one of tone, which involves the semantic mode. The everyday connotation of "humor" is that it is accessible and if not good-natured, certainly lacking the potential cutting edge associated with wit. This distinction in common usage

is seen in the cliché, “rapier wit,” and the fact that vicious or cruel humor is usually labeled “sick,” signifying that it is being used in an abnormal way. By nature, wit tends to be more satisfying than humor, and is usually considered of a higher order, because it is more difficult to recognize, tending to be concealed and having a broader and more complex range of reference. In musical terms, wit disturbs the prevailing sense of esthetic point of view in a less explicit way than humor; wit has the nimble characteristic of nearly, but not quite, overstepping the bounds of propriety. Whereas wit is more difficult to recognize, due to its quick and subtle nature, humor has a different kind of difficulty in musical terms—humorous musical effects are often difficult to integrate for the opposite reason, just because they *are* so apparent. They may be so patently inappropriate in terms of the prevailing “emotional climate” that they are difficult to justify. Thus humorous musical effects are more potentially “wrong” than witty ones, and the different nature of difficulty that each presents the listener who must esthetically justify them when they occur helps to account for their difference in tone. However, wit and humor in music share the element of surprise, created by jarring or contradicting the prevailing esthetic point of view through both the structural and semantic modes of surprise.

Two Classical examples will serve to briefly illustrate these points. The cacophonous final chord of Mozart’s *Musical Joke* is interpreted in two ways, or two “frames of reference” in Koestler’s terms: first as a totally impossible chord, breaking the laws and spirit of Classical practice, and secondly as the quite reasonable result of incompetent country musicians. Neither interpretation is in itself amusing or acceptable, but through the process of “bisociation,” understanding the chord simultaneously in terms of both, the chord becomes humorous and reasonable.

Likewise, why is Haydn’s famous fortissimo chord in the slow movement of the “Surprise” Symphony comic, as well as surprising? Had it been played piano, it would have served the acceptable and normal function of closing the preceding phrase on a feminine ending while being the upbeat to the next phrase. However, the fortissimo shatters the quiet and formal seriousness of the emotional climate, forcing the chord to stand out in functional isolation. It is the “bisociation” of these two interpretations, the chord’s potential but unrealized role as a point of elision and the startling change in emotional tone produced by the sudden and unexpected dynamic change, that produces both surprise and amusement. In these two examples, an unusual structural surprise is made acceptable by being filtered through the semantic mode.

My concern in what follows is not with wrong chords and strange progressions, extra-musical considerations, and good-humored material,

but with possibilities of wit and humor in tonal process of a more subtle kind depending not only on short-range surprises in syntax but in longer-range procedures as well.

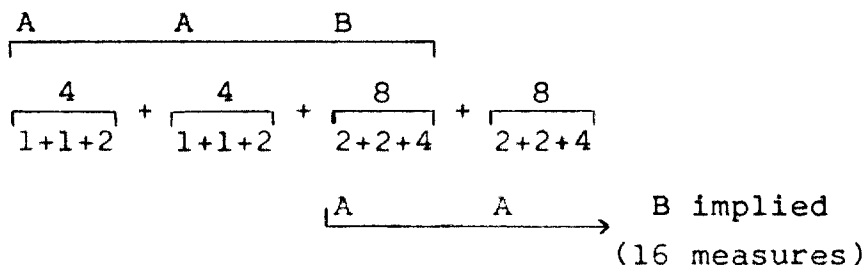
In normal musical process, the listener senses the more obvious "roads not taken," heightening the pleasure of those that the composer has chosen. But given the fact that tonal music implies many possible routes along the way, in both short- and long-range terms (another central concept in Professor Meyer's work), the composer may choose to follow more obvious paths while keeping less obvious ones as possibilities in reserve. The veiled presence of implied but deferred possibilities beneath the explicit surface course of the music, fundamental in serious tonal process, can also be turned to humorous and witty account, as seen in the first movement of Beethoven's piano sonata in F major, op. 54.

This movement is constructed on the alternation of two highly contrasting sections of material, following a formal outline of: A B A' B' A'' Cadenza—Final Statement. Sections A and B are both deceptive in tone and function, due to disparities between their formally open and closed aspects, and disparities between their apparent and actual functions in the process and form of the movement. These points will serve as the focus of the discussion.

Section A (measures 1-24) has deceptive contrasts between its open and closed aspects, between those which demand an answer and those which do not. Its drawing-room character is created with formally and rhythmically closed material: a) the obvious rhythmic repetitions, supported by the melody and harmony, create a stop-and-go effect, preventing sustained motion (in Tovey's words, the music "sits down" at each barline); b) the melody constantly returns to the tonic; and, c) the formal construction of each four-measure statement, on an AAB pattern, is also closed. All of these features are consistent with the marking *tempo d'un Menuetto* and its 18th-century connotations. But these prominent features are deceptive—they help create the formal character which to the knowledgeable listener suggests that the section most likely will be formally closed, with the entire section understood, then, as a formal unit. The material is deceptive because its surface character signals one message, that it is closed, but in longer-range terms the section remains open-ended both in terms of form and process.

In terms of form, the cumulative phrase structure demands a sixteen-measure answer which does not appear, thus section A is felt to be incomplete. Diagram 1 illustrates how the second eight-measure group is redundant to the first AAB phrase group, composed of 4+4+8 measures. Functional confusion is the result of the larger AAB phrase structure created by the eight-measure repeat of material, and the absence of the implied

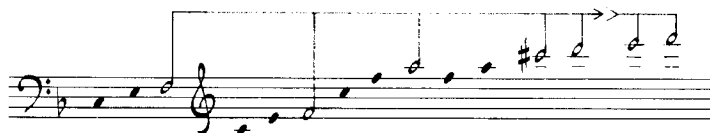
DIAGRAM 1



sixteen-measure answer. Ironically, Beethoven precludes a sense of formal conclusiveness by means of a highly formal, repetitive phrase structure that would normally be closed.

In terms of process, there is a large-scale melodic pattern of structural tones begun but not completed, an implied stepwise ascent from C# to the tonic F in the highest register, illustrated in an outline in Example 1.

EXAMPLE 1



The ascent is twice blocked on D, in measures 13 and 21, and although it is completed in perfunctory fashion at the cadences in measures 15-16 and 23-24, since they are in the wrong register and in a context of descending motion, the need for a more decisive resolution in the correct upper register remains.

The importance of this implied ascent in the structure and process of the movement cannot be over-emphasized. Yet there is no way for the listener to recognize its importance at this point because its crucial role in creating the vague sense of incompleteness is camouflaged by the highly formal surface character of section A.

Other features contributing subtly to the openness of section A include: a) the emphasis on the subdominant at the expense of the dominant, weakening the harmonic stability of the tonic; b) the constant presence of the melodic tonic which becomes mildly oppressive, generating a need for change; and, c) the contrasting registers that support a sense of open-

endedness, easily demonstrated by playing the opening statements in the same register.

To sum up, the appearances of section A are deceiving—it is not the formal and closed section that it pretends to be. Melodically and rhythmically closed smaller units reinforce the formal, dance-like character, but the incomplete phrase-structure and structural melodic ascent give the subliminal message, “to be continued.”

Just the opposite is the case with section B, measures 24-69. It interrupts the unfinished processes of section A with startling contrasts: its constant motion and seemingly purposeful stepwise direction, forte dynamics and staccato articulation, and descending orientation. But section B is also deceptive. Its forceful character and constant motion is consistent with open-endedness in process, but section B is actually closed because it does not generate any large-scale pattern beyond itself. Sequences give the appearance of strongly directed motion, but they are short-range in effect, undercut by the constant return to the starting point, the dominant. Potentially clear goals are obscured by hemiolas and harmony deflecting motion back onto the dominant. Section B is full of bluster that does not create long-range implications. Interest lies largely in the play of rhythmic groupings, two to three beats in duration, as in measures 25-29.

Since the material of section B, stated on the dominant, is essentially circular, its restatement in  $A_b$  is a surprising tonal step whose point is not only to create tonal contrast but to allow a witty return to section A through the enharmonic identity between  $C\sharp$  and  $D_b$ , referring to the prominent chromatic motive heard in section A, illustrated in Example 2.

#### EXAMPLE 2



Section B gives the impression of being open-ended in process, but it is in fact closed, thus its surface character also fools our expectations about what kind of section it is. Given the deceptive nature of the material in

both sections, the next question is how such seemingly irreconcilable sections can work together toward resolution of the movement as a whole.

At this point in the movement, having heard both sections A and B followed by a smooth and somewhat deceptive return to section A, a knowledgeable listener is most reasonably interpreting and expecting in terms of a rondo principle. There is ample reason to assume that section B may not be heard again, or that even if it is, the contrasts between sections A and B will be clearly maintained. There is no way to know that the two sections will begin to interact in surprising syntactical and structural ways that contradict rondo expectations.

The major link in process between sections A and B is that they both block completion of the structural melodic ascent implied in the first appearance of section A, though this important link is initially somewhat veiled by the obvious contrasts in their character. The penultimate note of the ascent, E, is reached and emphasized in the correct register in measures 34-36 of section B, but it does not continue to the tonic, F. The unprepared step into A $\flat$  blocks further ascent by reversing direction. Thus sections A and B are more than the closed formal units in a rondo-like alternation that their character and contrasts suggest—in fact, they are unexpectedly bound together in process by sharing the major structural function of deferring the implied resolution of the large melodic rise on the upper tonic F. The wit of the movement resides in this basic contradiction: the normal expectations of how the material in sections A and B should behave, based on its prominent features of character and short-range effects, are fooled by the actual long-range structural process and resolution.

When section A returns in measure 69, its repeated statements are melodically elaborated in measures 73-76 and 85-93. The elaboration in sixteenth-notes lends a new continuity to material that earlier was marked by stop-and-go motion, but continuity was the most prominent aspect of section B. I suggest that section A begins to adopt aspects of section B (seen also in the appearance of the lower neighboring-tone, a prominent melodic detail in section B). This comparison is given in Example 3.

Yet another pattern from section B is the descending sequence in thirds which is made apparent through the continuous motion of the sixteenth notes. Compare measures 25-28 of section B with measures 90-93 of section A, given in Example 4. The *sforzando* on G in measure 92 helps clarify the pattern of descending thirds.

I also suggest that the melodic elaboration is not purely decorative, but that Beethoven is lessening the formal character of section A and allowing it to borrow more sustained motion and melodic details from section B



EXAMPLE 3

Musical notation for Example 3, measures 28-109. The first system (measures 28-32) is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The second system (measures 33-37) is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The third system (measures 38-42) is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs.

EXAMPLE 4

Musical notation for Example 4, measures 25-90. The first system (measures 25-30) is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat, featuring triplet markings. The second system (measures 31-36) is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The third system (measures 37-42) is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing slurs.

by design, further contradicting the presumption that the sections will maintain their functional and character contrasts. It might even be said that section A is making overtures to section B by borrowing prominent

features from it, signalling the listener that there is a new process of limited but recognizable interpenetration, at least on the part of section A, that would not have been supposed from their initial confrontation.

Some important changes occur in the second and shortened appearance of section B, including a reference to section A. There is a reversal in direction, with hemiolas now supporting the strongly-directed ascent to the dominant in measures 97-100. For the first time, section B lends support to the structural ascent in measures 98-101, though in a low register. Also, the dominant function is decisive and straightforward this time. Ironically, forward motion stops twice on the dominant chord, in measures 103 and 105; the rhythmic pattern of measures 102-103 is repeated, the second time piano. Thus the formal, stop-and-go aspect of section A makes a brief appearance in the unfamiliar surroundings of section B.

Section A evolves even greater continuity in its third appearance as the passage-work literally connects registers that were previously separated. The sixteenth note triplets appearing in measure 123 suggest the triplets of section B in diminution, and in measure 131 they once again follow the pattern of descending thirds (C – A – F – D).

Clearly, the original dance-like character of section A is submerged under the melismatic continuity in the melody. By this point in the movement, the initial deceptive relationship between the two sections is revealed. They are not the presumed incompatible opposites co-existing in a rondo-like design, but are seen to share the basic function of delaying resolution of the structural ascent to the tonic in the highest register. The delayed structural resolution has allowed the sections to surprisingly borrow features of syntax from each other, though section A has borrowed more from section B than vice versa.

The identity of the structural ascent from C to F is made explicit in the cadenza, measures 132-136, which isolates and emphasizes D and E in measures 133-134, though in different registers, and then leads to the final section through an *adagio* ascending chromatic scale from C# in measure 136.

I hesitate to call the final section a “coda,” its usual designation, for three reasons: a) the final step from E to F in the upper register is reserved for the very final cadence, so that this section is structurally essential from the melodic point of view, underlined by the repeated ascent through the octave in the bass line in measures 144-146; b) despite the F pedal point in the bass, this statement is rich in dominant function, and it can be understood as a satisfying harmonic answer to the previous statements of section A which were weak in dominant function as well as being the answer to the consistently incomplete phrase-structure of section A; and, c) this section is the apotheosis of the weakened sense of opposi-

tion between sections A and B. The rhythmic profile of section A is present in the right hand with little sense of discontinuity in motion because it is heard over a cushion of continuous triplets in the left hand, basic rhythmic material from section B. In this final statement, characteristic features of sections A and B lie superposed.

In my introduction I stated that *structural* surprise must be accompanied by what I called *semantic* surprise, an alteration in "emotional climate," in order to be witty or humorous. Semantic unexpectedness in this movement is accomplished completely by internal means, relying on a stylistically informed listener. By gradually revealing that expectations generated by the character and short-range procedures of the material contradict the actual relationship between the sections and the long-range structure, this movement serves to illustrate that effects of wit and humor in music need not be merely obvious, but that they can be embodied in the structural process of an entire movement as well.

In order to respond to the wit of the work, one must understand its parts as deceptive, roughly equivalent to the deadpan comedian's lines which are flat in themselves but amusing in combination. I suggest that the material of sections A and B is intentionally ironic, section A having an excessively formal drawing-room manner just as the octave passages of section B have a Dickensian bluster. If taken "seriously," or one-dimensionally, the movement will seem contrived, but approached with a willingness to be deceived, and allowing Koestler's process of "bisociation" to occur, its wit and humor become apparent.<sup>11</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Henry F. Gilbert, "Humor in Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 12 (1926) p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note the distinction between a poor or weak passage which is recognized as such, as opposed to a passage which stretches the norms of a style and is potentially "wrong."

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: Macmillan, 1964) p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Ironically, just the opposite is often the case with new and unfamiliar works. The audience interprets their "wrongness," that is, their new features which contradict older norms, as comic even though the intent is very likely serious.

<sup>7</sup> Koestler, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Koestler, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Meyer, p. 275.

<sup>11</sup> This article is an expanded form of a paper delivered in 1974 at the national meeting of the American Musicological Society in Washington, D.C.

SETTLING AN OLD SCORE: A NOTE ON  
CONTRAFACITUM IN ISAAC'S  
LORENZO LAMENT

*Richard Taruskin*

The relationship between Heinrich Isaac's funeral motet *Quis dabit capiti meo aquam* and his *Missa Salva nos*, which share three passages of music, has recently become a matter of controversy.<sup>1</sup> Professor Martin Staehelin has argued that the Mass preceded the motet essentially on grounds of common sense, this furnishing the simplest explanation both for the use of the concluding phrase of the antiphon *Salva nos* as ostinato cantus firmus in the motet, and for the three identical passages as well. Professor Alan Atlas has argued that motet preceded Mass on the basis of his conception of fifteenth century common practice, and, secondarily, on philological considerations. Neither scholar has really based his contention on the evaluation of positive evidence. Indeed, they both seem to agree that there is no real evidence available to illuminate this question, since both have appealed to "factors inexplicable for the present—or perhaps, forever." And therefore it is no wonder that they have reached a deadlock—neither has proved his point or disproved the other. But I believe that this is a problem which does admit of a real solution, and that valid avenues of approach to the question have remained untried.

"Internal evidence" is a risky thing. Too often, invoking it merely masks subjectivity or, worse, circular reasoning, as when authenticity is affirmed or denied on the basis of style criteria the investigator himself has posited. And yet it seems that we have gone too far the other way and have become overly leery of such evidence since in the present instance it seems not to have occurred either to Prof. Staehelin or Prof. Atlas to examine the motet and the Mass any further than merely to note their shared material. Some further analysis of the works, I believe, will decisively support Professor Staehelin's thesis that the Mass came first.

The definitive identification of the famous ostinato cantus firmus in the *secunda pars* of *Quis dabit* actually raises a bigger problem than it solves. For this chant fragment—the concluding phrase of the antiphon *Salva nos*—is not really all that appropriate to a funeral motet. *Salva nos*, a glance at the *Liber Usualis* reveals, is the antiphon to *Nunc dimittis* at Compline on Sunday. The "rest" with which the chant is liturgically associated is thus not eternal, as both Prof. Staehelin and Prof. Atlas have assumed (and Simeon of the Canticle himself notwithstanding),

Measures	Voice carrying the "et requiescamus in pace" motif
Prima pars: *	
Osanna II	1-8 Superius
	9-12 Bassus (bound with altus and tenor in a faux-bourdon-like parallel construction)
Osanna II	11-14 Superius
	15-32 Tenor
	24-27; 28-31 Bassus, simplified
	[33 "free"]
Cum sancto	34-37 Tenor
	38-46 Tenor, transposed down a third
	47-51 Superius
	52-64 Tenor
Cum sancto	Secunda pars: Bassus <u>ostinato</u>
Tertia pars:	
Kyrie II	1-18 Tenor, first three notes held out as pedals
	19-23 Bassus
	23-29 Tenor
	30-39 Tenor

\* For purposes of simplicity, this chart follows the layout of the motet as printed in Wolf's edition, the most easily accessible version. As Professor Atlas points out ("A Note on Isaac's Quis dabit", p.107 footnote), the secunda pars and tertia pars are actually the two halves of the "residuum" as the motet is found in its sources.

but merely nocturnal. Why, then, did Isaac, who could have had his pick of genuine funeral chants for constructing his non-liturgical *planctus*, choose to build his ingenious *secunda pars* on a melody which is only by stretching a point suitable to his purpose? The situation begins to smack strongly of contrafactum, the more so in view of the “occasional” nature of the motet, and the understandable hurry involved in meeting so sudden and unexpected a deadline as a funeral.

But wait: the *secunda pars* is not one of the sections the Mass and motet have in common, and it has long been regarded as a prime example of Netherlandish musical symbolism, with its reduction to three voices at the word “Laurus” (laurel tree) in the text which allows the composer the pun “Laurus tacet” (“Lorenzo is silent”) as rubric in the tenor part, and the *bassus* line’s “descent into the grave” through repetitions of the very chant whose appropriateness we have called into question. Surely music fits text here like a glove.<sup>2</sup> The *secunda pars* is certainly no contrafactum, despite its reliance on a chant of doubtful relevance. Thus, aspects of the *secunda pars* seem variously to suggest and to deny contrafactum as a factor in the genesis of *Quis dabit*—on the face of it, a paradox.

However, comparison of the use of the cantus firmus in the Mass and motet points out an interesting relationship that has hitherto escaped notice. As Wolfgang Osthoff was first to remark in print, the “et requiescamus in pace” motif runs like a thread through the whole of *Quis dabit*, not just the *secunda pars*. Table I summarizes, with some additions, the information presented by Osthoff<sup>3</sup> on the cantus firmus’ migrations and ties this information together with what we know to be concordances with the Mass.

The fact that the three sections of the Mass found in the first and third parts of the motet are based on the same chant fragment as the famous *secunda pars*, Isaac having thus quite deliberately employed the “et requiescamus” motif as unifying motto for all three sections of his lamentation, in turn suggests the final step in our investigation. Having determined the extent of the “et requiescamus” fragment’s use in the motet, let us turn to the Mass and see how it functions there. Although (as the table above already suggests) other voices participate in the use of the *cantus prius factus* in *Missa Salva nos*, the basic chant-carrying voice is the traditional tenor. Example 1 is an analysis of the chant melody into its constituent phrases, of which “et requiescamus in pace” is the last; Table 2 then summarizes the deployment of these phrases in the Mass tenor.

Here is our proof of the Mass’ priority. For not only does Isaac employ in his motet Mass sections based exclusively on the motto-fragment E, he employs *only* those sections based entirely on E, and *all* the sections

EXAMPLE 1

Sal-va nos, Do-mi-ne, vi-gi-lan-tes, cu-sto-di nos dor-mi-en-tes:  
 ut vi-gi-le-mus cum Chri-sto, et re-qui-es-ca-mus in pa-ce.

*Antiphonale Romanum* (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1949) p. 64.

Phrase D differs somewhat from the version Isaac used in *Missa Salva nos*. Since the argument here hinges solely on phrase E, no attempt has been made to find or reconstruct the "original" D.

TABLE 2

Mass section	Chant phrases in tenor
Kyrie I:	AB
Christe:	CD
+ Kyrie II:	E
Et in terra:	ABCD
Domine deus:	A (three times)
Qui tollis:	BCD
Quoniam:	ABCD
+ Cum sancto:	E
Patrem:	ABCD; ABCDE
Et incarnatus:	? (perhaps a <u>super-colorierte</u> AB)
Crucifixus:	EAB; EAB
Et in spiritum:	AB; ABCDE
Sanctus:	ABCD
Pleni:	Tenor tacet
Osanna I:	ABCDE
Benedictus:	ABCD
+ Osanna II:	E
Agnus I:	AB
Agnus II:	Tenor Tacet
Agnus III:	ABCDE

(+ denotes section used in motet)

based entirely on E. Thus, his selection of Mass sections for contrafacture is anything but capricious or random. There can no longer be any question of priority, for three reasons: 1) If Mass contrafacts motet, why wasn't the entire motet (or at least the first and third parts) absorbed into the Mass? If, on the other hand, we assume that the motet contrafacts Mass, then it is clear that Isaac used exactly that portion of the Mass which suited his purpose, not a note more and not a note less. 2) The use of phrase E as cantus firmus is clearly a climactic device in the Mass. The Kyrie II, Cum sancto, and Osanna II are placed where they are as the culmination of a sequential employment of the entire antiphon; they are the "finales" of the Kyrie, the Gloria, and the Sanctus. These sections are thus far too deeply embedded in the long range structure of the Mass to account for their presence by accident, whim, or—the next step—contrafactum. Their positioning is clearly the result of careful planning (witness above all the Gloria, where E is so dramatically withheld until the Cum sancto). The motet, on the other hand, has a laxer structure—static rather than dynamic, agglutinative rather than progressive. Such a formal situation is well served by contrafactum. To claim that contrafactum is responsible precisely for the structurally most significant, climactic parts of the Mass strains credibility. 3) We now have an explanation for the "reversed" order of Mass sections in the motet. A glance at Table I will show that the use of the chant motif in each of the three Mass sections in the order they appear in the motet is increasingly extensive and impressive. The Osanna is the shortest of them,<sup>4</sup> the Cum sancto somewhat longer. The Kyrie II, as usual, is the longest and the most complete in itself, and therefore furnishes the bulk of the *tertia pars*.

The circumstances attendant upon the composition of *Quis dabit capiti meo aquam* may then perhaps plausibly be reconstructed as follows: Isaac, faced with the necessity of coming up with a funeral motet for his deceased patron in a hurry, and yet wishing to write a work that will do justice both to Lorenzo and to Poliziano's poem (as well, perhaps, as to his own oft-noted reputation as nimble craftsman), comes up with the ingenious idea of basing his motet on the last phrase of the *Salva nos* antiphon, since it possesses two advantages for him. First, it is sufficiently close to the requiem text to substitute for it, in a pinch, as a symbolic ostinato in the *secunda pars*; and second, he has a ready Mass on the antiphon, three of whose sections are based on this chant phrase and are thus ripe for plunder in the first and third parts. Far from a random or inexplicable thing, if looked at this way the relationship between Mass and motet sheds revealing light on the methods of one



of the most seasoned—shall we say “hardboiled”?—professionals among Renaissance musicians.

As we have already suggested, the arguments advanced in favor of the motet’s priority were based largely on untested assumption. It remains to be pointed out that the assumption in question is fundamentally incorrect, and indicates the need for more caution in distinguishing between *contrafactum*<sup>5</sup> and parody, which of course are two entirely different, even unrelated devices. Unlike parody, *contrafactum* is not a “building” process. It does not expand small works into large ones. It is merely a process of re-using, of transferring, ultimately of economizing. Its history extends much further back than that of parody—as far as Notker, at least—and as early as the Notre Dame period *contrafactum* was more often used as a way of extracting parts from wholes than for “building” from smaller to larger designs.<sup>6</sup> The contention that re-use of material automatically implies a progression from the small to the large is without historical foundation.<sup>7</sup>

The facts regarding the true relationship between *tricinium* and Mass in the period under discussion point to the opposite conclusion. A survey of the sources rather quickly reveals that *tricinia* were commonly extracted, just like the more popular *bicinia*, from larger works, both for instructional and for recreational purposes,<sup>8</sup> and that the presumption in the event of concordance between textless *tricinium* and Mass should be that the former was extracted from the latter, not that the latter was “built” from the former.<sup>9</sup> Formschneider’s *Trium vocum carmina* (RISM 1538), for example, contains ten “Tenor tacet” sections from Masses (*Pleni, Christe, Benedictus, Crucifixus, Agnus II*) by Obrecht, Issac, Ghiselin, and others, out of a total of one hundred compositions all presented without text, title or attribution.<sup>10</sup> Ten percent is no inconsiderable portion, and I have no doubt that the percentage will rise, since seventeen pieces in Formschneider’s anthology still await identification.<sup>11</sup> A number of such identifications in the work of Isaac himself are rather easy to make thanks to the publication of a volume of his Italian-period Masses in the series *Archivium musices metropolitanum Mediolanense*.<sup>12</sup> For example, the famous *tricinium* by Isaac entitled “Benedictus,” and found with and without attribution in no less than fifteen sources from the *Odhecaton* to the Henry VIII manuscript,<sup>13</sup> is in fact the *Benedictus* of his *Missa Quant j’ay au cor*.<sup>14</sup> The rigid small-to-large model of “standard compositional procedure” in Isaac’s time would presuppose that Isaac “built” his Mass around this preexistent instrumental piece, which quite coincidentally already bore the title *Benedictus*. One might add that this *Benedictus* would be a rather peculiar starting

point for the conception of this particular Mass, since it does not carry the Busnois-derived tenor on which the Mass as a whole is based.

Another concordance: it comes as no small surprise to find that one of the rare surviving polyphonic *bassadanza* settings of the fifteenth century, the three-part composition found in Verona, Biblioteca capitolare DCCLVII and in Leipzig, Universitäts-Bibliothek 1494 (Apel Codex), is in fact the Agnus II of Isaac's *Missa La Spagna*.<sup>15</sup> Far from an impressive *Spagna* ricercar like Josquin's or Ghiselin's, this setting has often been cited as particularly close to the kind of primitive polyphonic improvisation one could imagine an "alta" ensemble extemporizing day in and day out to accompany the dance. It is unthinkable that Isaac should have troubled to write such a piece for such an ensemble for such a purpose, for to accomplish such a purpose such an ensemble hardly needed such a composer. It is easy, however, to imagine Isaac amusing himself and his *bassadanza* loving, noble audience by incorporating into a Tenor Tacet section of his Mass a kind of genre depiction of the *Spagna* tune as it functioned in "real life"—a deliberately naive, artless pseudo-improvisation to set off all the more impressively (and, given the context, unexpectedly) the sophisticated polyphony of the rest of the Mass. In any case, we only have a satisfactory explanation of the contrafactum if we assume the priority of the Mass, not the primitive *alta* setting.

In conclusion, may I venture the suggestion that a certain amount of unnecessary speculation and misapplied methodology might be avoided if scholars were to try to break the habit of relying exclusively on external evidence, on "facts about" music when it comes to deciding historical questions. While a narrow focus on internal evidence can certainly lead to circularity and parochialism, it seems to me that the same pitfalls threaten at the opposite, or indeed any, extreme.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alan Atlas, "A Note on Isaac's *Quis dabit capiti meo aquam*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27 (1974) pp. 103-110; Martin Staehelin, "Communication," *JAMS* 28 (1975) p. 160; Alan Atlas, "Communication," *JAMS* 28 (1975) pp. 565-566.

<sup>2</sup> And only the Poliziano text. There is no comparable "inevitability" in the setting of the *Cantantibus organis* text Prof. Atlas discovered as palimpsest in Capella Guilia XIII.<sup>27</sup> (see the original study by Prof. Atlas). As far as I am concerned this alone is enough to dispose of all claims the Cecilian text might have to authenticity. I must additionally point out that nothing in either his subsequent communication or Prof. Staehelin's really succeeds in establishing whether—as Prof. Atlas rather sanguinely asserts—the "*Cantantibus organis* text came to be associated with the music" at all, or whether there was any "function the motet served with that text."

All we really have here is a curiosity, at least as easily accounted for (Prof. Atlas' denials notwithstanding) by "scribal error" as by any of the facts Prof. Atlas so assiduously marshals around it.

<sup>3</sup> *Theatergesang und darstellende Musik in der italienischen Renaissance* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1969) vol. 1, pp. 178-179.

<sup>4</sup> Unlike the *Cum sancto* and *Kyrie II*, it is not separated from the preceding section by a double bar and a set of clefs and mensuration signatures, but only by a clear cadence and a general pause. See Prof. Staehelin's edition (*Musikalische Denkmäler* 7 [1973]) p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> For our purposes the term "contrafactum" will be used in a slightly expanded meaning to include the removal or addition, as well as the replacement, of text. Thomas Noblitt ("*Contrafacta* in Isaac's Missae *Wohlauf, Gesell, von hinnen*," *Act musicologica* 46 [1974] pp. 208-216) uses the term in this way, and Prof. Atlas' approving reference to Noblitt's article implies endorsement of such usage.

<sup>6</sup> The earliest instance that occurs to me of contrafactum involving a Mass ordinary setting is the case of Bartholomeus of Bologna's ballata *Vince con lena*, whose two sections are found embedded without significant change in a Gloria by the same composer that directly follows the ballata in Oxford, Canonici 213. (Ballata, f.135; Gloria, ff.135'-136. Ripresa=Gratias agimus tibi; piedi=Qui tollis. The *chiuso* ending is found in a third place, the melisma just before the Amen. For the ballata, see John and Cecie Stainer, *Dufay and His Contemporaries* [London: Novello & Co., 1898; repr., Amsterdam: Frits A.M. Knuf, 1963] p. 60. Stainer also prints a facsimile. For the Gloria, see Charles Van den Borren, *Polyphonia Sacra* [Burnham and London: Nashdom Abbey and The Plainsong and Medieval Music Society, 1932; repr., University Park: Penn State Music Press, 1963] p. 37.) Reese's assertion that "no mere *contrafactum* is here present, since more takes place than the substitution of one text for another; the Gloria contains additional music" (*Music in the Renaissance* [rev. ed., New York: Norton] p. 28), is a somewhat cumbersome hypothesis that relies on the small-to-large model we have seen fit to call generally into question. Why couldn't the ballata have been extracted from the Gloria? Because it preceded the Gloria in the source? Recalling that in manuscripts of the time secular pieces were commonly used as space fillers, it is just as logical to assume that the ballata was entered later than the Gloria. In any event, assuming the priority of the Gloria makes this case an instance of ordinary and unremarkable contrafactum instead of an isolated and prophetic parody.

<sup>7</sup> Such an untested assumption led Prof. Atlas' "Communication" into a logical trap (*JAMS* 28 (1975) p. 566). For when he applied this footless historical model to the problem of Isaac's *Wohlauf, Gesell, von hinnen* Masses, and then called the result thus obtained "evidence" for application to the question of priority between *Quis dabit* and *Missa salva nos*, his argument achieved a perfect circle.

<sup>8</sup> Even complete-textured four-voice sections could be detached, as witness the *Kyrie II*, *Sanctus*, and *Hosanna* from Obrecht's *Missa Fortuna Desperata* that appear without text in Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio, Ms. 2439 (ff.33'-36). It seems to me, incidentally, that there is no reason to segregate these pieces, merely because of their concordance with the Mass, from the many other chanson and instrumental settings of the *Fortuna* tune as has tacitly been the practice among students of the Franco-Flemish chanson and instrumental repertoires. To do so is to make a distinction that had no meaning for the late 15-century musician.

<sup>9</sup> "Presumption", and not "assumption", for the former regards as probability what the latter already takes for fact; I do not mean to replace one inflexible model with

another. I recognize, for example, that there are reasonable grounds for accepting the prior existence of one (*not* both) of the tricinia concordant with the Missae *Wohlauf*. When Prof. Noblitt mentions in a footnote that “variants in the extant sources of these two sections suggest that the instrumental *tricinia* were composed first” (Noblitt, “*Contrafacta*,” p. 215), he overgeneralizes and thereby overstates the case. What he is probably referring to is the fact that the tricinium concordant with the Et incarnatus of the Mass a 4 (= Et in spiritum of the Mass a 6) is found—as “Comment peult auoir yoye”—in Cap. Giulia XIII.27 in a notably simpler, less florid version. This may be taken as indicative of priority but, as Prof. Noblitt himself acknowledges, “the evidence is not conclusive.” The simple-to-complex model is no more infallible than the small-to-large, however it may appeal to our sense of order. The other tricinium, which concords with the Qui tollis in both Masses, is found only in Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Ms. 18810 and Munich, Universitäts-Bibliothek 328-331, sources datable by their contents (and in the case of the first, by actually dated compositions of Senfl) as having been compiled in the early 1530s, more than fifty years later than the earliest sources of the Mass which Noblitt and Atlas both assume to have been “built” around it! It seems odd to me that Prof. Atlas should attempt to build a case—however “tentatively”—for the priority of the Lorenzo motet over the *Missä Salva nos* on the basis of a virtually negligible difference in the ages of their earliest surviving sources (some ten years at the very outside), while at the same time he can maintain with Prof. Noblitt that in the case of the *Wohlauf* Masses “the order of composition *must* have been secular tricinium, then the Mass a 4, and finally the Mass a 6” (“Communication”, *JAMS* 28 p. 566 italics added).

It should be noted further that the presumption with regard to tricinia obviously need not apply to such four-part cantus firmus pieces as *La mi la sol*. The priority of the instrumental piece over the motet and Mass settings has been convincingly demonstrated (see Prof. Staehelin’s edition cited above, p. 171; also Martin Just, “Heinrich Isaacs Motteten in italienischen Quellen,” *Studien zur italienisch-deutschen Musikgeschichte* 1 [1963] pp. 10-15). Here, too, “internal evidence” offers support, for the prevalence of repeated notes in the concordant Missa *O praeclara Credo* (particularly at the beginning; cf. p. 127 of the edition) suggests unmistakably that larger note values have been broken up—ergo contrafactum. The point is that all cases should be decided on their merits, not by mechanically applying a model of dubious historicity.

<sup>10</sup> See Howard Mayer Brown, *Instrumental Music Printed Before 1600* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) pp. 59-61. Also Prof. Brown’s valuable comments in his introductory note, “Eustachio’s Historical Position”, to Hans T. David’s edition of Eustachio Romano’s *Musica Duorum* (*Monuments of Renaissance Music* 6 (1975) pp. 43-44.

<sup>11</sup> A casual examination of the source, as this article was going to press, has in fact confirmed this prediction: Number 87 turns out to be the Pleni from Obrecht’s *Missä Salva diva parens*.

<sup>12</sup> Vol. 10, *Heinrich Isaac: Messe*, ed. Fabiano Fano (1962).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Helen Hewitt, *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A* (Cambridge: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1942) p. 161-2.

<sup>14</sup> Actually, this was reported as early as 1963 in the article by Just cited in note 9 above, where a number of concordances between Isaac’s sacred and secular works are noted and, I think, the correct interpretation made: “Um für Lorenzo de Medici und seiner Kreis Carmina bericztustellen, muss Isaac gelegentlich auf ältere Kompositionen zurückgreifen” (p. 3). Here are two more such borrowings, hitherto unreported

as far as I am aware: *Missa chargé de deuil, Christe* (Fano ed., p. 76) = *Amis de que* (Johannes Wolf ed., *Heinrich Isaac: Weltliche Werke, [Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Osterreich 28/1959]* p. 63); the same Mass, *Qui tollis* (Fano ed., p. 82) = *A fortune contrent* (Wolf ed., p. 64). A curious near-concordance is the *Domine fili unigenite* of the *Missa La Spagna* and the untitled "Carmen" published by Wolf as *Instrumental-satz #52* (p. 120). Both compositions are constructed on the same "point", with the order of entrances reversed.

<sup>15</sup> For the bassadanza setting, see *Das Erbe deutscher Musik* 32 (1956: *Der Mensural-kodex des Nikolaus Apel* 1, ed. Rudolph Gerber) p. 74. For the Mass movement, see Fano ed., p. 33.