

An ecological approach to score-familiarity: representing a performer's developing relationship with her score

Dr Vanessa Hawes

Department of Music and Performing Arts, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK
vanessa.hawes@canterbury.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Background

This work builds on previous research addressing connections between structure and experience in music in terms of motivic order (Hawes, 2010), and forms a pilot study for a larger project currently in the planning phase. The paradigm of an ecological approach to perception (Gibson, 1986; Clarke 2005; Clarke, Dibben & Pitts 2010), frames an exploration of experiential (performative, expressive) and structural (analytical, compositional) affordances. A comparison of these affordances and the mapping of one onto the other to provide an adjusted and enhanced representation of the structure of two songs and a singer's understanding of their structure. This combined approach is then used to address larger issues of meaning in the songs.

The scores forming the basis for enquiry are Songs IV and V from Schoenberg's song cycle, *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten*, Op.15 (1908-9). The cycle was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, as an atonal work, it provides a focus for studying the singer's developing relationship with the music, independent of the frameworks of tonality which can be seen as a series of structural affordances which might overwhelm other, more performative, aspects of the music and the learning process. Secondly, there is a large corpus of detailed analytic studies of the song cycle (for example, Lewin, 1973; Dill, 1974; Domek, 1979; Larson, 1987; Forte, 1992; Zeeuw, 1993; Brown, 1995; Banga 2009), providing a rich source-set from which to draw representations of structure and structural affordances. This sustained interest in the cycle within the work of analysts and musicologists suggests it will be well-received as a familiar topic of research, at least in these two sub-disciplines of music study (one might posit that musicological theories about the cycle as a manifestation of the breakdown of tonality, (see, for example, Brown, 1995), and its place in music history and in Schoenberg's oeuvre are affordances of the cycle as a whole that continue to render it interesting to music study; affordances that are strengthened by each subsequent analysis). Lastly, the singer expressed an interest to learn music of this particular style, with which she was relatively unfamiliar, thus the project had a pedagogical, as well as a research-oriented, purpose. Songs IV and V were chosen because they occur at a moment of dramatic and narrative importance in the cycle, as the narrator in George's poems (the texts of the cycle with the same name) realizes the extent of the love that drives the whole story (Song IV) and surrenders to it (Song V). An additional reason for choosing these two is that they are two of the most approachable songs of the cycle for a singer who is not familiar with the style, and these two were the least likely to be perceived as

insurmountable learning tasks. These two songs afforded the engagement of a singer unfamiliar to the style because of their appearance of simplicity and score-length of just two pages each.

Three data-sets drawn from different sub-disciplines within music study as a whole are compared: analytical texts; the singer's behavior during rehearsal and performance; and what the singer says in interview about the experience of learning the songs and her view of their structure and content.

The primary analytical source for this study is Forte's article in the *Journal of Music Theory* (1992) which concentrates on the identification and categorization of linear motivic tetrachords (expressed as pitch-class sets) through the cycle, with a view to representing these tetrachords in fore-, middle- and background contexts. Forte uses song V as a case study to prove the validity for linearity in atonal music to be theorized in a similar way to *Urlinie* in Scheklerian analysis of tonal music. The focus on the linear variation of motivic materials is of particular relevance to the here, since the focus is on the singer's relationship with her own line and her developing familiarity with it (and subsequent ability to perform it).

Aims

Both this pilot study and larger project aim to link qualitative, empirical approaches from music psychology and performance analysis with theoretical, analytical and musicological issues; combining different types of musicological knowledge in order to develop ways of learning more about musical works, ways that are relevant to the performer *and* the analyst because they provide non-typical readings (non-typical to the particular sub-discipline as a result of their combinatorial inception). A wider aim, therefore, is to explore ways that the increasingly disparate sub-disciplines of music study might work efficiently and effectively together.

Main Contribution

The observation and coding of the videoed rehearsals and the interview data produce representations of the performative/learning affordances of the songs based on performance and expression. These representations are then used to adjust and elaborate Forte's analysis, and the performative/experiential information provides the basis for the development of a new structural representation of the music. The direction of influence is from expression to structure, rather than the more common direction from structure to expression (where expression is backgrounded as simply a gloss on structure). The structure to expression approach has been the subject of much criticism in recent

work, particularly in reflections on performance analysis of the last ten years (for example, Cook & Dibben 2001; Rink, Spiro & Gold, 2011) reflections which encourage studies combining the two in a more balanced way (as in, for example, Hatten, 1994). A reinterpretation of Forte's analysis is then used as the basis for a discussion about issues in reception and meaning, including the translation of the original George poems.

Implications

This paper is a pilot study for a larger project focused around the combination of methods from performance analysis and formal analysis, and plans for further research extend into many areas, including a broadening of the study to include a discussion of several other analyses of the Opus 15 song cycle, as well as studying other singers, other genres and adapting and adjusting the methodology in order to generate a clear picture of how the information gained from this study might be beneficial to singers (performers), analysts and musicologists.

Keywords

Performance
Analysis
Affordance
Ecological approach to perception

REFERENCES

- Banga, D. (2009). *Arnold Schoenberg's Approach to Text Setting in "The Book of the Hanging Gardens"*. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Ottawa). Retrieved from <https://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/en/handle/10393/8544>.
- Brown, J. (1995). Schoenberg's Musical Prose as Allegory. *Music Analysis* 14(2/3), 161-191.
- Clarke, E. (2005). *Ways of Listening*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, E., Dibben, N. & Pitts, S. (2010). *Music and Mind in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cook, N. & Dibben, N. (2001). Musicological Approaches to Emotion. In P. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.) *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research*. New York: Oxford University Press, 45-70.
- Dill, H. (1974). Schoenberg's "George-Lieder": The Relationship Between Text and Music in Light of some Expressionist Tendencies. *Current Musicology* 17, 91-95.
- Domek, R. (1979). Some Aspects of Organization in Schoenberg's "Book of the Hanging Gardens", Opus 15. *College Music Symposium* 19(2), 111-128.
- Forte, A. (1992). Concepts of Linearity in Schoenberg's Atonal Music: A study of the Opus 15 Song Cycle. *Journal of Music Theory*, 36(2), 285-382.
- Gibson, J. (1986). *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hatten, R. (1994). *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Hawes, V. (2010, August). Information Representation for Analysis and Interpretation of Motivic Order. In F. Gualda (Chair), *Scalable Analytic Approaches and Performative Affordance*. Symposium conducted at the 11th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition, Seattle, Washington.
- Larson, S. (1987). A Tonal Model of an "Atonal" Piece: Schönberg's Opus 15, Number 2. *Perspectives of New Music* 25(1/2), 418-433.
- Lewin, D. (1973). Toward the Analysis of a Schoenberg Song (Op. 15, No. XI). *Perspectives of New Music* 12(1/2), 43-86.
- Rink, J., Spiro, N. & Gold N. (2011). Motive, Gesture and the Analysis of Performance. In A. Gritten & E. King (Eds.) *New Perspectives on Music and Gesture*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 267-292.
- Schoenberg, A. (1995). *The Book of the Hanging Gardens and Other Songs for Voice and Piano*. New York: Dover.
- Zeeuw, A. (1993). A Numerical Metaphor in a Schoenberg Song, Op. 15, No. XI. *Journal of Musicology* 11(3), 496-410.