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The Communication of the Voice Leading form an Interpretative Perspective.

Favio Shifres.

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at Queen's University

Society for Music Perception
& Cognition 2001

KINGSTON, CANADA
AUGUST 9-11, 2001

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**CONFERENCE
PROGRAM
AND
ABSTRACTS**

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2001 Meeting of the
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August 9-11, 2001 at Queen's University
Kingston Ontario
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Session: Selected Issues in Performance

August 11 : 1:30 - 3:50 : Room B

Chair: Rosemary Mountain

Favio Shifres
University of La Plata

The Communication of the Voice Leading from an Interpretative Perspective

Expressive music performance is often assumed to operate according to a hierarchical system of rules, an assumption that may be called the "generative hypothesis." These rules act not only as organisers of expression but also a common code between performers and listeners, which is used by listeners to capture structural attributes of music and to represent it hierarchically.

More recently, an interpretative approach has been proposed to explain the originality of expert performances and the ambiguity observed in some performance actions. This approach interprets expressive performance as a text or dramatic stage on which the performer assigns meanings and creates characters. The interpretative approach helps to elucidate the relation between expressive performance and high-level structural components of music. In this paper, I discuss musical performance from an interpretative perspective.

First, I illustrate an analysis of timing and dynamics of different performances of Chopin's Prelude Op 28 No. 6 in B minor. I argue that: i) each interpretation or "reading" of the musical work emphasises both tonal and metrical attributes on different structural levels; ii) such an interpretation manifests itself as a coherent organisation of expressive components, which operates on performance attributes such as phrasing; iii) the function of the expressive resources used by the performer depends on the musical context.

Two experiments were run to examine the nature of communication between performer and listener. The aim of Experiment 1 was to test the generative hypothesis, according to which boundaries between more important hierarchical groupings are emphasized through the use of timing and dynamics. Subjects listened to a performance and were asked to segment it twice according both to the highest and lowest hierarchical level of grouping structure. Results indicate that timing and dynamics alone do not determine perceived segmentation as predicted by the generative hypothesis.

In Experiment 2, listeners assessed different performances using a set of adjectives. Adjectives were grouped into four categories alluding to: 1) music structure; 2) emotions; 3) dramatic structure; and 4) kinetics (gestures and movements). Results suggested that aspects of each performance could be represented by adjectives in all four categories, but the category of emotions was the most salient.

Results are discussed according to an interpretative (pragmatic) approach to musical performance.

Renee Timmers
University of Nijmegen

Stolen Times and Inflexible Duration in the Timing of Ornaments

Prolongation is a structural phenomenon described by music theory, in which some musical events—such as chords, tones, etc.—remain active within the musical flow, even though they are not physically present. However, both the way in which prolongation is experienced and the nature of its representation in the listener are far from being elucidated. The present study aims to find evidences