

University of North Texas

Proposal for Thesis

Master of Music in Music Theory

College of Music

**Division of Music History, Theory
and Ethnomusicology**

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**A Phenomenological Application to the Analysis of Atonal Music:
A Discussion of Webern op. 3, no. 1, “Dies ist ein Lied für dich allein”**

Introduction

The analysis of tonal music from a phenomenological perspective as exemplified in David Lewin's 1986 article "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception" offers a promising methodological approach. In questioning the nature of musical perception in a general way, this method effectively examines the motivational relationships between specific musical perceptions and the analytical observations and assertions that comprise the act of musical analysis. Especially emphasized in Lewin's approach are the centrality of *context* in determining the organization of musical perception and the notion of *expectation* as regards the implication by one musical perception of another perception that would realize said implication.

The purpose of this thesis is to apply Lewin's phenomenological method, to be more fully explicated below, to the analysis of Webern's op. 3, no. 1, and, in so doing, to explore the applications of a method originally developed for the analysis of tonal music to the analysis of a freely atonal composition. This analysis of Webern's op. 3, a set of five songs setting poems from Stephan George's "Der siebente Ring" and the first set of atonal compositions published by Webern, will provide valuable insight into Webern's early atonal style. The first song of the cycle, "Dies ist ein Lied für dich allein," has been selected for this analysis for its compatibility with Lewin's method, and this song alone from the cycle will be considered so as to allow a deeper analytical investigation of a smaller amount of material. While the end goal of this research project is to produce a close reading of the song, the analytical journey will be of greater value than the destination, so to speak, in exploring the notions of context and expectation mentioned above as they apply to this freely atonal song.

The need for such a contribution is expressed by Jack Boss in his recent 2009 article "The Musical Idea and the Basic Image in an Atonal Song and Recitation of Arnold Schoenberg," in

which he describes Lewin's comments regarding the contextual determination of musical perception as providing "an analytical model within which conflicting understandings of a piece's coherence can co-exist as separate processes involving different (phenomenological) [sic] objects."¹ The introduction to Boss's article, specifically, decries what he perceives to be a deficiency in the current state of atonal analysis in his assessment of set-theoretical analyses as tending to lack the sort of multivalent readings of musical material that Lewin's method makes possible. Boss's article, however, refers to Lewin's ideas only as a precursor to a discussion that applies Schoenberg's notion of "the musical idea" as its primary analytical method. As such, Boss's article leaves the opportunity open for a more rigorous application of Lewin's phenomenological approach in the analysis of atonal compositions.

Before moving on to the literature review, I would like to clarify that my application of a phenomenological method originally developed for the analysis of tonal music within a freely atonal context is not intended to suggest that the perception of tonal music is an experience entirely identical with the perception of atonal music. For instance, the absence of traditional tonal syntax in freely atonal music seems especially antithetical to the notion of perceptual expectation as it is generally understood in regards to tonal music. The notion of expectation in a freely atonal context is, in fact, one of the main questions that this thesis will aim to address. The primary mechanism that will be applied to resolve this problem is the distinction between a larger sense of expectation as it addresses the freely atonal *idiom* and a smaller sense of the notion as it addresses *individual pieces*. The discussion of Webern op. 3, no. 1, will demonstrate the smaller sense of expectation as it is exhibited in that particular song and will subsequently investigate the notion of atonally idiomatic expectation in a more questioning, but still open-minded, manner.

1. Boss, 224.

Literature Review

The main literary sources that I will be consulting in writing the proposed thesis are David Lewin's "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," as this article is the primary inspiration for the project, and the bulk of phenomenologically oriented literature that Lewin refers to in the introduction to that article. Lewin's unpublished essay "Morgengruss" will provide a larger context for his argument in the above mentioned article. Edmund Husserl's *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* and Izchak Miller's *Husserl, Perception, and Temporal Awareness* will be heavily consulted in describing the general history of phenomenology. Writings by Judith Lochhead, Thomas Clifton, Jonathan Kramer, and Christopher Hasty will be consulted to the extent that they contribute to an account of the history of phenomenological application in music theory, as will Dorothy Elliston Hindman's dissertation "Toward an Understanding of the Human Musical Experience: A Comparison of Perception, Theory, and Analysis in Works by Judith Lochhead, Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, and David Lewin." Brian Kane's recent article "Excavating Lewin's 'Phenomenology'" will also be consulted for tracing the sources of Lewin's phenomenological methodology in particular.

As regards the literature on Webern op. 3, sources will be consulted primarily as supplements to my own close analytical study. The work of Robert Wason has proven especially valuable to this end in the early stages of my research. The analytical scrutiny applied in Wason's article "Remnants of Tonality in Webern's op. 3/2" and his chapter "A Pitch-Class Motive in Webern's *George Lieder*, op. 3" have been very influential in shaping my analytical approach to this material. Wason's most helpful contribution in this regard has been his collaborative work with Elizabeth West Marvin "On Preparing Anton Webern's Early Songs for Performance: A

Collaborator's Dialogue," particularly the section of this work devoted to op. 3, no. 1. A number of other sources on Webern op. 3 are supplied in the present bibliography; they will be consulted as needed in the course of my analytical work.

Lewin's Phenomenological Methodology

In "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," David Lewin develops a phenomenological method of musical analysis that precisely defines certain musical perceptions within specified contexts. These perceptions are then related to one another in a variety of ways. Lewin applies this method by analyzing an excerpt from Schubert's song *Morgengruß*, a strophic song in C Major selected as the subject for his analysis in order to demonstrate the complex subtleties of musical perception within a presumably simple context. A two-voice reduction of the excerpt to be analyzed can be seen in Fig. 1, below.²

Figure 1: Lewin's reduction of Schubert's *Morgengruß* mm. 5-17

Lewin's analysis focuses specifically on a consideration of m. 12, which, despite its placement in the middle of the excerpt, is chosen as the discussion's point of departure due to

2. The figures displayed here are my own reproductions of Lewin's originals, and, accordingly, they are given different figure numbers. I have abridged figures 2 and 3 according to the scope of my synopsis. For the original figures, see Lewin, 344-6.

problematic aspects of its harmonic identity as a first inversion g minor chord within the key of C Major. In fact, Lewin asserts that the purpose of his analysis is “to examine with some precision the *variety* of formal perceptions that are generated by such a variety of formal [contexts] for the [events] of measure 12, and for other related families of events.”³ Specifically, Lewin sets out to examine the variety of harmonic functions that the events of m. 12 imply when those events are considered within a variety of relatively expanded or contracted contexts.

In order to handle such an elusive abstraction as “musical perception” with the specificity required to make his argument, it is necessary for Lewin to introduce a set of terms and to relate them with one another. To this end, he proposes a basic formula to function as a descriptive model for “a musical perception”:

$$p = (\text{EV}, \text{CXT}, \text{P-R-LIST}, \text{ST-LIST})^4$$

Lewin goes on to define the elements of this formula as follows:

Here the musical perception p is defined as a formal list containing arguments. The argument EV specifies a sonic *event* or family of *events* being “perceived.” The argument CXT specifies a musical *context* in which the perception occurs. The argument P-R-LIST is a list of pairs (p_i, r_i) ; each pair specifies a *perception* p_i and a *relation* r_i which p bears to p_i . The argument ST-LIST is a list of *statements* s_1, \dots, s_k made in some stipulated *language* L .⁵

As this terminology is rather dense, I will attempt to avoid the heavy use of jargon in favor of clear description in simple language. I will employ this terminology, however, to the extent that it allows for the direct expression of some rather intangible ideas.

For a brief clarification of these terms, refer to the row “ p_2 ” on the table shown in Fig. 2, below. Here, “ p_2 ” simply functions as a label for the perception under consideration in this row

3. Emphasis is Lewin's; Lewin, 347.

4. Lewin, 335.

5. Emphasis is Lewin's; *Ibid.*

of the table. To the right, we see “m. 12” in the “EV” column. This clarifies that this perception refers to the musical events of m. 12. In the “CXT” column, we find “mm. 9-12,” which specifies the context within which this perception regards the events of m. 12.

In the “Selected P-R Pairs” (P-R standing for “perception relation”) column, relationships of this perception “p₂” to other perceptions listed on the table are clarified. For instance, “(p₁, terminal inclusion)” clarifies the relationship of p₂ with p₁ (which also considers the event of m. 12) on the above row of Fig. 2. Specifically, the context of p₂ (mm. 9-12) can be seen as an expansion of the context of p₁ (m. 12), and, as such, the context of p₂ has expanded to “include” the context of p₁. The “Selected SStatements” column simply refers us to Fig. 3.2, which supplies an analytical statement regarding the perception p₂ in the form of a musical example.

p	EV	CXT	Selected P-R Pairs	Selected SStatements
p ₁	m. 12	m. 12		Fig. 3.1
p ₂	m. 12	mm. 9-12	(p ₁ , terminal inclusion) (V-percept, questioning)	Fig. 3.2
p _{3a}	mm. 12-13	mm. 12-13	(p ₁ , incipital inclusion) (p ₄ , implication)	Fig. 3.3
p _{3b}	mm. 12-13	mm. 9-13	(p ₂ , denial) (p _{3a} , reinforcement)	Fig. 3.3
p ₄	mm. 12-13	mm. 12-13 plus expected m14	(p _{3a} , realization) (earlier d tonicization, elaboration)	Fig. 3.4

Figure 2: Lewin’s table of musical perceptions regarding the excerpt in Fig. 1

A brief examination of this terminology as applied in Lewin's analysis of the excerpt shown in Fig. 1 will clarify the above terminology's analytical usefulness and the manner in which I intend to apply it in my analysis of Webern op. 3, no. 1.

Lewin begins his analysis by describing p₁, a perception that considers the events of m. 12 within the limited context of m. 12 itself. Fig. 2 shows that no perception relations are listed for p₁, and the Selected SStatements column for this perception refers us to Fig. 3.1, a musical

example that asserts an analytical interpretation (see Fig. 3.1, below). Due to the extremely limited context for this perception, the musical example can only modestly assert that the events of m. 12 can be described as g^6 harmony, as there is not sufficient context to determine key or harmonic function.

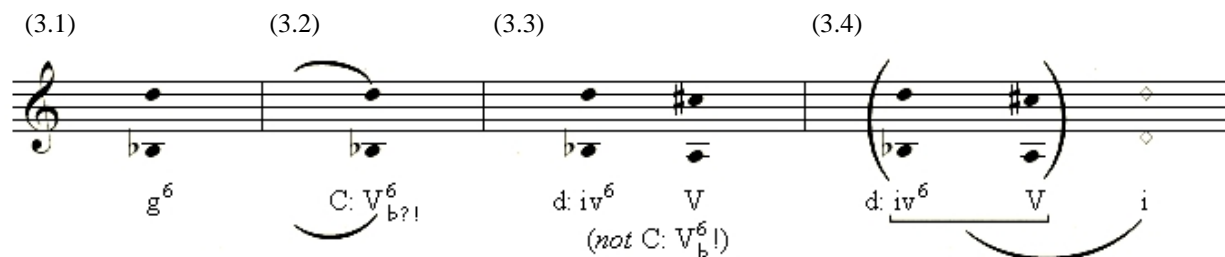


Figure 3: Lewin's musical example "SStatements"

p_2 examines m. 12 in the context of mm. 9-12, a context now broad enough to perceive C Major tonality and to assign harmonic function to what p_1 could only describe as g^6 harmony. However, given the dominant pedal of mm. 9-11, the minor quality of the g harmony in m. 12 is quite puzzling, as Lewin expresses in the statement of Fig. 3.2. The P-R LIST for p_2 shows two relations: (p_1 , terminal inclusion), which expresses a contextual expansion in relation to p_1 , and (V-percept, questioning), which expresses the puzzling sensation of perceiving g^6 harmony in a context that would have led us to expect *major* G^6 in C Major.

p_{3a} , in seeking to resolve the confusion expressed in Fig. 3.2, expands the context of p_1 forward in time to consider mm. 12-13 in their own context. As Fig. 3.3 expresses, *this* context perceives m. 12 not as a bizarre minor dominant chord in C Major, but as iv^6 harmony in d minor preceding dominant harmony in that same key in m. 13. In order to clarify the contradiction created by this perception as regards its relationship to p_2 , Lewin describes a p_{3b} that considers the events of mm. 12-13 in the context of mm. 9-13. By extending the context back to m. 9, Lewin is able to refer to the context that had prompted p_2 (the perception of m. 12 as minor dominant harmony in C Maj.) and to then refute p_2 entirely in *this* context, as expressed by

(p₂, denial) in the P-R-LIST for p_{3b}.

Looking back to p_{3a}, notice (p₄, implication) in the P-R-LIST. This relation expresses the *expectation* that one perception creates for another. In this case, in perceiving movement from subdominant to dominant harmony in d minor in mm. 12-13 as expressed in Fig. 3.3, we expect a perception in which d minor harmony is then articulated. Even though this d minor harmony is, in fact, not articulated in the measures that follow, p₄ represents a perception that posits an "expected" m. 14 (see Fig. 3.4), and, accordingly, (p_{3a}, realization) can be found in the P-R-LIST for p₄.

Lewin eventually describes perceiving m. 12, in the broader context of mm. 9-15 plus expected m. 16, as part of an elaborated dominant prolongation in C Major spanning mm. 9-15 (see Fig. 4, below). In this sense, the perception of m. 12 as a dominant-type harmony as expressed by p₂ is, in *this* context, vindicated.

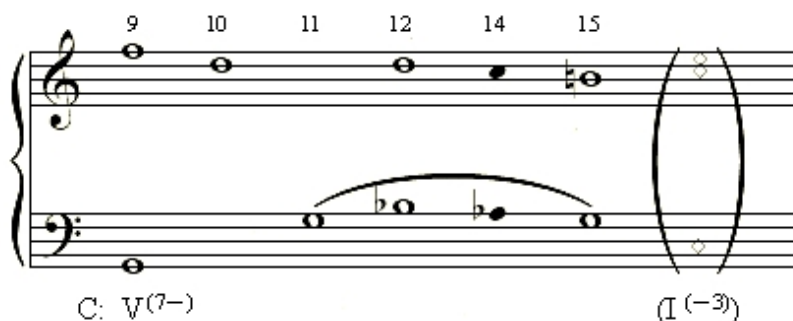


Figure 4: m. 12 as part of an elaborated dominant prolongation when viewed in a larger context

I hope that the above discussion has concisely and sufficiently familiarized the reader with the terms and applications of Lewin's methodology that I will employ in my analysis of Webern's op. 3, no. 1, as exemplified in the following sample analysis.

Sample Analysis

I will begin my sample analysis of Webern's op. 3, no. 1, by addressing the primary modification that I will apply to Lewin's technique, specifically as regards the temporal division

of music into measures. As demonstrated in Fig. 2 above, Lewin consistently refers to the musical events of various perceptions on his chart in terms of measure number, or, in prose, “the events of measure [n].”⁶ This approach works for Lewin because the material that he is analyzing involves tonal syntax that corresponds, more or less, to the division of measures. Since there is neither a traditional tonal syntax nor a meaningful segmentational function corresponding to the delineation of measures in the Webern song, labeling families of events according to measure number is not useful in this context. Instead, I have created my own, more motivated, *temporal segments*, which I have supplied in Fig. 4, below. Accordingly, families of events will be signified in terms of “T-Seg_n,” or, in prose, “the events of T-Seg_n.”⁷

Figure 4: A reproduction of the Webern's op. 3, no. 1, score: mm. 1-5 with supplied temporal segmentation

Note that, while the notion of temporal segmentation resembles that of segmentation as generally understood in atonal set theory, temporal segments are only utilized here in order to enable the expansion or contraction of perceptual contexts for musical events contained therein

6. Lewin, 345.

7. The T-Segs designated in this sample analysis will most like be larger than those found in the proposed thesis. The T-Segs used here are larger so as to give a concise, general description of the proposed methodology.

with a specificity that the division of measures in the score cannot facilitate. As such, “temporal segmentation” and the more analytically assertive “segmentation” of musical material *within those T-Segs* belong to separate logical classes.

This sample analysis will proceed with a description of perception p_1 , which, as Fig. 5 indicates below, considers the events of T-Seg₃ within their own context.

p	EV	CXT	Selected P-R Pairs	Selected SStatements
p_1	T-Seg ₃	T-Seg ₃		Fig. 6.1
p_2	T-Seg ₃	T-Segs _{2,3}	(p_1 , terminal inclusion) (p_1 , modification) (G nat. accent-percept, support)	Fig. 6.2
p_3	T-Segs _{1,3}	T-Segs _{1,3} plus expected T-Seg ₄	(G nat. accent-percept, support) (p_4 , implication)	Fig. 6.3
p_4	T-Segs _{1,5}	T-Segs _{1,5} plus expected T-Seg ₆	(p_3 , confirmation) (Gb initiated vocal phrase, implication)	Fig. 6.4

Figure 5: A table of musical perceptions regarding the excerpt in Fig. 4.

There are no P-R Pairs indicated in the P-R-LIST, and the Selected SStatements column directs our attention to an analytical assertion that is represented by Fig. 6.1, below. This musical example shows set-theoretical segmentation of T-Seg₃ according to musical features within that context. Most obviously, the vocal melody and piano harmony are segmented separately, and Fig. 6.1 reveals that the piano harmony [1,2,4,5] (0134) is a literal subset of the vocal melody [1,2,4,5,7] (01346). The vocal pitches F E C# [1,4,5] (014) are segmented as a subset of the vocal melody according to their rhythmic association as triplets, standing out against their eighth note counterparts. The segmentational priority that this rhythmic feature attributes to set class (014) in the vocal melody motivates a similar segmentation of subsets in the piano harmony, revealing two overlapping contiguous (014)’s: [1,4,5] on top and [1,2,5] below.

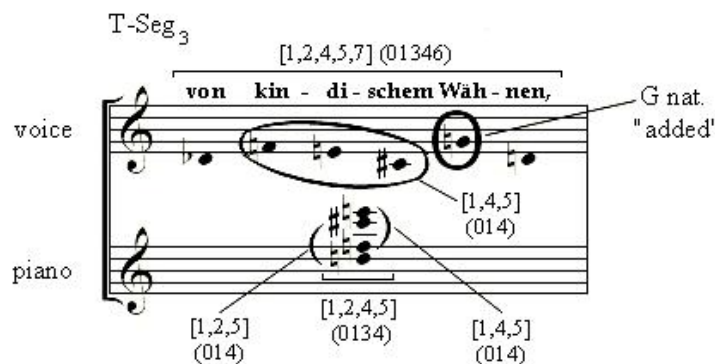


Figure 6.1: A musical example depicting the statements of perception p_1

Finally, the G nat. is circled in Fig. 6.1, as this pitch class is “added” to the pitch material of the piano harmony to comprise the pitch material of the vocal melody. This G nat. pitch is also accented in a variety of other ways: 1) in terms of range (a leap up following a descent), 2) in terms of meter (a longer eighth note following the metrically contracted triplets), and 3) in terms of text (as the accented syllable of the object of a prepositional phrase: “von kindischem Wähnen”).

p_2 considers T-Seg₃ in the expanded context of T-Segs₂₋₃. As Fig. 6.2 demonstrates, this contextual expansion motivates the re-evaluation of analytical content as regards the segmentation of T-Seg₃ into meaningful pitch relations. Here, pitches are now associated according to semi-tone relations: F-E and Db/C#-D nat. in both the vocal melody and the piano harmony. This focus on semi-tone relation is motivated by the strong presence of such relations found in T-Seg₂ (refer to Fig. 4 to examine the F with E pairing in alternating pitches in the vocal line, as well as intense alternation between B nat. and Bb in the “bass” and “alto” voices of the piano part, and D nat. C# Eb, G nat. Gb F in the “soprano” voice).⁸ This segmentational re-evaluation of the material in T-Seg₃ is expressed in the P-R-LIST for p_2 as (p_1 , modification). Also, notice that G nat. is, just as in Fig. 6.1, emphasized as a strong individual pitch class as it

8. Robert Wason comments at length on such semi-tone relations in Wason, 1996. He makes specific reference to the D nat. C# Eb motive, which he calls “encircled D” throughout the song cycle.

has no semi-tone partner in T-Seg₃. This emphasis is expressed in the P-R-LIST as (G nat. accent-percept, support).

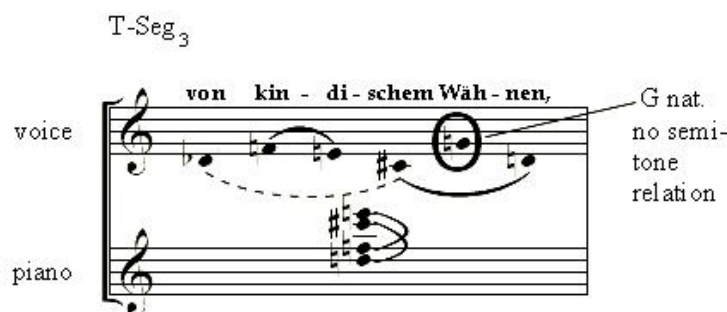


Figure 6.2: A musical example depicting the statements of perception p_2

Lewin would stress that, while p_1 and p_2 differ in their analytical assertions as regards T-Seg₃, these perceptions are *not contradicting descriptions* of a single event, but distinct musical perceptions that are each well supported within their own perceptual contexts. As such, these distinct perceptions do not constitute a dichotomy; rather, they can be seen as adjacent readings that form a complementary relationship. In this way, the modification of p_1 by the contextually expanded p_2 as expressed by the adjacent musical interpretations put forward by Fig. 6.1 and Fig. 6.2 demonstrates the importance of context in the organization of musical perceptions.

p_3 considers T-Seg₁₋₃ in the context "T-Seg₁₋₃ plus expected T-Seg₄." Fig. 6.3, below, illustrates the imitation of the opening vocal line ("Dies ist ein Lied für dich allein:") in the "soprano" voice of the piano part in T-Seg₂₋₃. Especially subtle is Webern's inclusion of E nat. in this imitative line as the top pitch of the piano chord of T-Seg₃. Again, we find that the pitch class G nat. is given special emphasis in the piano part in various ways: 1) in terms of its insertion into the imitative piano line, 2) in terms of range (it is the highest note of T-Seg₃ up to that point), and 3) in terms of meter (as the only piano note articulated on the downbeat of count 4, as coinciding with the last vocal pitch of the imitative line, and as a longer duration than the eighth notes preceding it). Again, we see (G nat. accent-percept, support) on the P-R-LIST. Also

on the P-R-LIST is (p_4 , implication), suggesting an expected T-Seg₄ with a B \flat to conclude the imitative line in the piano part.

The musical score for Figure 6.3 shows a voice part and a piano part. The voice part has the lyrics "Dies ist ein Lied für dich al-lein". The piano part has a circled note in the first measure of the second T-Seg₂. Above the staves, T-Seg₁ is labeled above the first measure, T-Seg₂ above the second measure, T-Seg₃ above the third measure, and "expected T-Seg₄" above the fourth measure.

Figure 6.3: A musical example depicting the statements of perception p_3

p_4 considers T-Segs₁₋₅ in the context "T-Segs₁₋₅ plus expected T-Seg₆" and confirms the implication of p_3 that a B \flat in the "soprano" voice of the piano part would conclude the imitative line (see the top pitch of the first piano harmony of T-Seg₄). p_4 is also given a broad enough context to perceive that the first pitches of each small vocal phrase in T-Segs₁₋₅ comprise the first three pitches of a larger-scale imitation of the opening vocal line (see Fig. 6.4).⁹ We expect that this pattern will continue with a G \flat as the first pitch of the next vocal line in a following T-Seg; thus, (G \flat initiated vocal phrase, implication) is found on the P-R-LIST for p_4 .

The musical score for Figure 6.4 shows a voice part and a piano part. The voice part has the lyrics "Dies ist ein Lied für dich al-lein: von kin-di-schem Wäh-nen, von from-men Trä-nen...". The piano part has a circled note in the first measure of the second T-Seg₂. Above the staves, T-Seg₁ is labeled above the first measure, T-Seg₂ above the second measure, T-Seg₃ above the third measure, T-Seg₄ above the fourth measure, T-Seg₅ above the fifth measure, and "expected T-Seg₆" above the sixth measure.

Figure 6.4: A musical example depicting the statements of perception p_4

9. Straus, 2005 and Marvin, 1995 point out this large-scale motivic statement.

This sample analysis defines four musical perceptions and examines relationships between them. The pair p_1/p_2 demonstrates the way that contextual expansion can modify the analytical reading of a musical event: the modification of p_1 by the contextually expanded p_2 is illustrated in the modified analytical stance expressed in Fig. 6.2 in relation to that expressed in Fig. 6.1. The pair p_3/p_4 considers the notion of perceptual expectation as experienced in a freely atonal context, specifically in terms of observed patterns (melodic imitation) in the small-scale context of a single song. Finally, these notions of contextually determined perception and perceptual expectation will be considered first in small contexts as in this sample analysis and then in progressively larger contexts, moving toward a consideration of the song as a whole.

Conclusion

This phenomenological approach to musical analysis in the tradition of David Lewin is highly promising in its application to music composed in a freely atonal style. The primary strengths of the proposed methodology in a freely atonal context are its capacity to facilitate: 1) an extremely close reading of the material; 2) the consideration of adjacent readings of specific musical events according to differing perceptual contexts and, in that vein, the consideration of how those adjacent readings complement one another; and, perhaps most interesting, 3) an investigation into the nature of perceptual expectation in a “syntactically free” atonal context, in terms of implication, confirmation, and denial relations. For these reasons, the proposed thesis will constitute a valuable contribution to the literature pertaining both to the phenomenological application to musical analysis and to the analysis of Webern's early atonal compositions.

I.

Fließend. (♩ = 60) Zart bewegt.

Gesang. *pp* Dies ist ein Lied für dich al - lein: von kin - di - schem Wäh - nen,

Klavier. *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp*

von from - men Trä - nen... *p* *rit.* *Tempo* *p* Durch Mor - gen - gü - ten klingt es

pp *pp* *ppp*

rit. *pp* ein leicht be - schwing - tes. *etwas langsamer als zu Beginn* *pp* Nur dir al - lein *etwas langsamer als zu Beginn*

rit. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

rit. - ppp *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

möcht es ein Lied — das rüh - re sein. *rit.* *ppp*

Appendix I - Provisional Outline:

Chapter 1: Phenomenology and a History of its Application in Musical Analysis
Pages 1-20

Chapter 2: An Introduction to the Poetic Text and Musical Form of Webern op. 3, no. 1
Pages 21-25

Chapter 3: An Application of Lewin's Methodology in the Analysis of Webern op. 3, no. 1
Pages 26-55

Chapter 4: A Consideration of Perceptual Expectation in the Atonal Idiom
Pages 56-65

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Final Thoughts
Pages 66-75

Appendix II - Proposed Timeline:

September 2011 - Thesis Proposal

December 2011 - Thesis Draft

January 2012 - Return of Thesis Draft

February 2012 - Submit Thesis to Committee

March 2012 - Thesis Defense

March 16, 2012 - Submit Thesis to Dean

March 30, 2012 - Submit Thesis to Toulouse Graduate School

May 4, 2012 - Submit Final Corrections to Toulouse Graduate School

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