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# Orientation Processes and Perspectivism
# in Music Analysis

**Introduction**

Music analysis is part of many kinds of scholarly music research. Often, it is applied without much reflection on its purpose, methods, or goals. However, analytical results are dependent on the methods and goals of analysis, and analytical methods usually serve a specific purpose. Thus, methodological reflections on choosing analytical approaches and methods are teleological activities (teleology being the explanation of phenomena in terms of the purpose they serve). This paper will specifically deal with orientation processes in music-analytical undertakings.

Today we encounter a vast array of elements to analyze that relate to music, and we also have a vast array of analytical methods. Considering elements of / related to music, perhaps we can distinguish:

Pitch / Pitch Organization
Scale(s) / Tonality / Modality / Atonality
Melody / Theme(s) / Motive(s)
Rhythm
Harmony
Harmonic rhythm
Form
Texture
Tempo
Time / Duration
Articulation
Dynamics
Timbre / Instrumentation
Silence
Dramaturgy
Tension / Energy
Tone Production / Technique
Other Artistic Aspects
Pedagogical Aspects
Creativity / Spontaneity
Other Physical Aspects / Non-Physical Aspects
Musical Meaning
Musical Quotes
Visual Elements
Performance Venues
Interpretation / Performance Practice
Audience Behavior / Interaction
Geographic Elements
Psychological & Cognitive Aspects / Perception
Aesthetics / Mood / Feeling
Historical & Biographical Contexts
Social & Cultural Contexts (e.g., purpose, intent)
Political & Economic Contexts
Communication Processes / Communicative Elements
For Music with Lyrics / Words / Texts:
    Text–Music Relationship
    Language
    Text Sources / Meaning / Structure
    Story / Plot

Analytical pursuits can be undertaken to target any of these musical elements, or a combination of them. Analytical approaches or methods can target specific musical elements, or they can emphasize a particular procedure or method. Common general approaches to music analysis are:

Focus on Specific Elements of Music
    Harmonic Analysis of Tonal Music
    Formal Analysis
        Overall Form
        Phrase–Structure Analysis
    Rhythmic Analysis
    Melodic / Thematic / Motivic Analysis
    Contour Analysis
Focus on Specific Kinds of Music
    12-Tone Analysis
    Pitch–Class Set Analysis
    Analysis of Non-Western Music
    Electronic Music
    Multi-Media Analysis
General Way of Analyzing
    Comparative Analysis
    Descriptive Analysis
    Computer Assisted Music Analysis (CAMA)
    Reductive Analysis
    Deconstruction
    Hermeneutic Analysis
    Cognitive Approaches to Music Analysis

The list of specific approaches and methods of music analysis is long and may include:

Aesthetic Analysis
Structural-Aesthetic Music Analysis (Karbusicky)
Structuralist Music Analysis (Molino)
Post-Structuralist Music Analysis
Category & Feature Analysis:
    Style Analysis (Adler, LaRue, Crocker)
    Cantometrics (Lomax)
    The Natural History of Song (Harvard Music Lab; S. Mehr, M. Singh, M. Glowacki)
Motivic and / or Thematic Analysis
    Organic Motivic Analysis / Analysis of Thematic Processes (Réti)
    Guertin
    Epstein (fusion with Schenkerian criteria)
Contour Analysis (Friedmann; West Marvin & Laprade)
Kinetic-Syntactic Analysis (Halm)
Reductive Analysis
    Schenkerian Analysis
        Schenker Analysis
        Neo-Schenkerian Analysis
    Generative Theory of Tonal Music
        Laske
        Jackendoff / Lerdahl
Analysis of Tonal Pitch Space (Lerdahl)
Wordless Functional Analysis (Keller)
Mathematical Analysis
    Information Theory (Cybernetics) Analysis
    Pitch-Class Set / Set Theory Analysis (Forte, Morris, Rahn, Morgan, Baker, etc.)
    Klumpenhouwer Networks (K-nets)
    Mazzola
Geometrical Analysis (Tymoczko)

Transformational Theories
    Neo-Riemannian Analysis (Hyer, Mooney, Cohn)
    Transformational Theory (Lewin, Lerdahl, Hook, Kopp)
    Tonality & Transformation (Rings)
Analysis of Analytical Processes (Laske)
Tone Field Analysis (Albert Simon)
Phenomenological Analysis (Ansermet; Batstone; Pike; Clifton)
Hermeneutic Analysis
    Hermeneutic Interpretation (Kretzschmar, Goldschmidt, etc.)
    Semiotic Analysis (Tarasti; Nattiez; etc.)
        Distributional Analysis (Ruwet)
Narrative Music Analysis (Abbate, Cone, Hatten, Kivy, Almén, etc.)
Deconstruction (Street; Montgomery)
Descriptive Analysis (Tovey)
Analysis of Non-Western Music (Arom; Agawu; a variety of analytical approaches)
Analysis of Popular Music (variety of approaches)
Psychological / Cognitive Approaches to Music Analysis
    Music as Experience (Kurth, Westphal)
    Gestalt Analysis (e.g., Utriainen)
    Cognitive Theory of Musical Meaning (Meyer)
    Implication Realization (Narmour)
    Cognitive Metaphor Theory (Brower)
    Psycho-Acoustic (Parncutt)
    Cognition of Basic Musical Structures (Temperley)
    Musical Organization (Zbikowski)
Affect Analysis (Laszlo, and others)
Music Emotion Analysis (Juslin, Zbikowski, Spitzer, …)
Schema Theory (Monelle, Gjerdingen, …)
Analysis of Creative Processes in Music (Kinderman)
Psychoanalytical Analysis of Music
Analysis of Energy and Tension (Kurth)
Proportional Analysis of Early Music (M. Henze; Sanders; Trowell)
Analysis of Early Music (with foci on voice leading, cadence formation, modality, composi-
  tional processes, and text structure) (Leech-Wilkinson; Fuller; Judd)
Analysis of Melody and Harmony in Modern Music (Schoenberg, Hindemith)
Analysis of Form and Tonal & Harmonic Movement (Lorenz)
Theory of Musical Forces (Larsen)
Analysis of 12-Tone Music
Form in 12-Tone Music (Hyde)
Analysis of Pitch Collections / Proportional Analysis / Axis Tonality (Lendvai, Pieter van den
  Toorn, Antokoletz, Susanni)
Interactive Aural Analysis (Michael Clarke)
Inszenierungsanalyse von Opern (Stephanie Großmann)
Opera Analysis (Shaftel)
Analysis of Sonic Design (Cogan & Escot)
Analysis of Electronic Music (variety of approaches)
Analysis of Multi-Media (Cook)
Empirical Analysis (Deliège, Clarke, Repp, Cook, Epstein, Rink, …)
Imaginary Museum of Musical Works (Lydia Goehr)
Analytical Segmentation
Distributional / Taxonomic Analysis (Ruwet, et al.)
Anti-Formalist Analysis (Kerman)
Analytical Approaches to Rhythm and Meter (Cohn, Forrest, Malin, Mirka, etc.)
Auditory Scene Analysis (Bregman)
Topics Analysis (Ratner, Mirka)
Empirical Analyses of Performances (Clarke; Repp; Cook)

With a great diversity of music from various periods and geographic locations, with a long list of musical elements that can be the focus of music analysis, and with a long list of music–analytical approaches and methods, I believe Werner Stegmaier's Philosophy of Orientation might help us navigate the vastness of music, musical elements, and analytical approaches, as "Orientation involves finding paths through the terrain and all the circumstances" (Stegmaier 2019: xi). I presented a more extensive version of this paper in Belgrade in 2019 (publication forthcoming); this short version provides a few key thoughts of Stegmaier's philosophy of orientation to music analysis, with added examples and with added comments on recent developments. While the general philosophical concepts related to orientation in this paper are a summary of parts of Stegmaier's Philosophy of Orientation, my own contributions here are all the music—and analysis—specific reflections and applications.

### 1. Stegmaier's Philosophy of Orientation

Stegmaier published his monumental *Philosophie der Orientierung* in 2008 and a shorter English version in September 2019. My quotes will all come from this latter English-language edition (Stegmaier 2019).

We require orientation, wherever we are and whatever we do. For example, if we would like to analyze a piece of music that we have never analyzed, we need to orient ourselves. But any orientation "is preceded by other orientations; orientations are always reorientations" (p. xiii). Werner Stegmaier's goal has been to investigate the conditions and structures of human orientation, and his philosophy of orientation "clarifies how individuals, despite their different orientations, are nevertheless able to find hold within their orientations, successfully communicate with each other, and at the same time, continually renew their orientations" (p. xv). But orientations may also fail and, thus, fall into disorientation, but usually, we can again re-gain orientation (p. xvi).

### 2. What is Orientation?

Orientation is "usually understood as an achievement in finding one's way in a new situation" (p. 1). But orientation precedes all definitions because we need to have already been oriented to define something. Orientation becomes questionable when we don't succeed, which means when we are disoriented (p. 1). This point is especially important for any research in which our goal is originality. We want to pursue a music research project that nobody else has done; we want to answer research questions that haven't been answered yet. While we use prior orientations, original research requires new or re-orientations.

Stegmaier provides a 3-step explanation: in the first step, orientation is the *achievement of finding one's way*; in the second step, orientation is the *achievement of finding one's way in order to find promising opportunities for action*; and in the third step, orientation is the *achievement of finding one's way in a situation to make out opportunities for action to master the situation* (p. 5).

### 3. Clues and New Situations

If orientation is initially unsuccessful, we start looking for clues (p. 6). In music research, and especially in music analysis, we may look at successful analytical studies, even if our analytical object is a different piece of music, possibly by a different composer or even from a different period or geographic region. But we then still have to find our own way and must consider our specific circumstances. We must ultimately orient ourselves on our own (p. 6).

If an orientation is preceded by another orientation, it is *temporal* (p. 8). Of course, we know this from music; music is also temporal in itself. Often, we run out of time when pursuing an analysis. I once analyzed a piece of music that was, as part of a composition competition, composed within 60 minutes, received 60 minutes of rehearsal time, and was then performed. My analysis (Schüler 2018), however, took many hours and was still incomplete. Of course, we know that there is not enough time for a "complete" musical analysis.

Stegmaier continues: "It is the *basic condition of all orientation to operate under uncertainty*. The certainties of orientation are its own certainties, which were initially acquired under the condition of uncertainty; … It is the persistent risk of orientation that something new could always come up that is relevant and that was not seen before, and orientation consists of dealing with this risk. Orientation, as a temporary orientation, copes with its risks by relying on something only for a time or only until something else comes up" (pp. 9–10). If we orient ourselves in the music-analytical process, we rely on our previous orientations, until we encounter new music, new musical circumstances, or a new analytical approach, etc.

When we rely on previous orientations and we are certain to do the right thing, we are relying on plausibilities. "Plausibilities are assumptions that are not in need of being justified. They are, in a word, self-evident. *Every orientation relies on what it regards as plausible or self-evident*" (p. 10). Plausibilities are usually not explained; if they are explained, plausibilities become questionable (ibid.), which we can see with the current discussion on Schenkerian Analysis, especially the connection between Schenker's known views on white racial supremacy and his theories of music. Before this issue was brought to light (in a 2019 SMT Plenary Session by Philip Ewell, published as Ewell 2021 and expanded as Ewell 2020[1]), Schenkerian Analysis was a plausibility, usually unquestioned when used. And with this example, we can see that if plausibilities become questionable, *arguments* are needed to justify the plausibilities. As far as I can see, courses on Schenkerian Analysis are now being revised. "Arguments are to make something clear or explicit which was obscure or implicit. … But what is plausible for one person may not be plausible for another; therefore, one argument may convince one person, but not another" (p. 10). If we convince ourselves or others, arguments and argumentations become or return to plausibilities (p. 11). This is exactly the case in any research, except that in research we more often than in real life make plausibilities questionable on purpose. We should explain, make explicit, our plausibilities in the music–analytical process and make them, thus, questionable; but we can't do so endlessly (ibid.). However, plausibilities and plausibility standards in music analysis have hardly been addressed.

## 4. Plurality of Music Analysis

Stegmaier's Philosophy of Orientation deals with standpoints and footholds; it allows for a variety of possibilities (pp. 12–13). Therefore, it is perfect for applying it to today's plurality of music analysis. Plausibility is accessible through language, and the phenomenology of music analysis is complemented with a phenomenology of the language of music analysis.

Although we only require orientation when dealing with a new situation, in music analysis we practically always deal with a new situation, because we don't always analyze the same music or the same musical elements or use the same analytical method. When we encounter or enter a music-analytical situation, "it is initially unknown what will be of concern or of interest in it" (p. 26); we must find out about it (ibid.). The "situation is not limited—neither in space nor in time" (ibid.). We may consider other elements previously not considered. That is why, in music analysis, elements such as historical, social, political, psychological, etc., may change the situation, both at the time when the piece was composed, or later when the piece was performed, or now when the piece is being analyzed. None of this information is irrelevant. What is most crucial here is that we have to consider other elements or perspectives previously not considered. My practical suggestion is, as I recently tried in my Methods and Methodology of Music Analysis course with graduate students, to go through a process of formulating research questions from various perspectives. It forces a re-orientation process and the questioning of conventions. For example, my students formulated the following questions related to harmony and melody regarding the Lied *Wenn ich in Deine Augen seh'* by Robert Schumann:

### Harmony
At what point is a Roman Numeral interpretation considered "incorrect"?
Can RN analysis be used to sufficiently understand Schumann's harmonic language in this piece?
Do you consider pivot chord modulation on V chords to be legitimate?
What are the functions of the secondary dominants within the piece?
Are there phenomenal accents using harmony specifically?
Are there modulations and, if yes, do they have a relation to a change in the composition's accompanying text?
If there are modulations, what is the relationship between keys?
Is there a large presence of non-chord tones within the piece? Why?
What are the functions of non-chord tones in this piece?
The piano accompaniment alters its bass clef to treble frequently; why would the composer choose to have a harmony in a higher pitch than lower?

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[1]  The original SMT Plenary talk was indeed published later than the expanded version, because the original SMT Plenary talk was published in a print journal, while the expanded version was published in an online journal that has a faster turnaround time for publication.

What function does the harmony serve in this piece?

Locate cadences. What functions do they have, and how do they relate to the meaning of the lyrics?

What is the distinction between Schumann's harmonic language and CLASSICAL harmonic language?

What is the distinction between Schumann's harmonic language and the harmonic language of some of Schumann's contemporaries?

How do slurs affect the harmony in their role of supporting the melody?

Why does Schumann insert different rhythms between the two clefs in a single measure?

How are dynamics used to add to the harmony's effect on the piece?

How does this compare to Schumann's general harmonic style?

How does the harmony of this work compare with Schumann's writings on harmony?

How does the harmony of this work compare with other works from the same time?

Does each 8th note in a triplet change harmony? Why would the composer choose to change the harmonies rapidly instead of just having a note or two being non-chord tones?

Are there prolonged harmonies using ties? Why would the composer choose to prolong it with ties instead of restating it? (ex: mm. 11–12)

If there are tonicizations, why would the composer choose to only briefly change the key instead of changing it for a longer and more solid duration? Vice–versa.

Is the harmony of the piece similar/different to other pieces that are contained in Op. 48?

Which elements does this harmonic language have in common with the harmonic language of Romantic music?

What is the relationship between harmonic language and meaning in this song?

How independent is the harmonic language from the meaning of the lyrics?

**Melody**

How can we characterize the melodic design, considering the dichotomy between chromaticism and diatonicism?

Is the melodic design regular or irregular?

How does the melodic design relay the meaning of the text?

What intervals are most commonly used in the melodic design?

How does the melody relate to the harmonic progression?

What is the standard for classifying non-chord tones?

Are there any relations between melodic contour and text?

Are there any relations between melodic range and text?

Are there any relations between dynamics and melody?

Describe the usage of the tonic in the melody and how it is both approached and departed.

Describe the melody's contour. Why does it generally stay in the same place for a majority of the piece? Does this add anything to the meaning of the piece?

Do the leaps in melody correspond to specific events/emotions in the text?

Are there points in which the notes for the vocalist are dissonant with the piano accompaniment?

Are there any augmented or diminished intervals within the melody? What are their functions?

How does the vocal range for the melody compare to those in works in the same genre/time period?

What relationship is there between melody, rhythm, and harmony?

Which elements did Schumann compose first (in the composition process)?

Is this melodic design particular or is it common with his other song compositions?

The possibilities of asking questions are manifold and extensive. In Stegmaier's words: "the situation of orientation can eventually be defined only negatively as that from which nothing may be excluded as irrelevant" (p. 27). In this situation, we are open to all and everything. The orientation then limits the situation that is being explored, or it may broaden or shift its focus (ibid.). "In the situation of orientation, the present consists of relevant matters from the past for the future" (ibid.). And in the situation of orientation, we can adapt to change (p. 29).

### 5. Contingencies

In any orientation, we deal with contingencies, which means we encounter surprises (p. 29). In music analysis, such surprises can be harmonic progressions not (or less frequently) encountered before, unusual rhythmic or formal structures, different use of motives and themes, or even an entirely different kind or style of music, etc. The list is endless. These surprises, or "irritations", "agitations", or "unsettlements" as Stegmaier calls them (p. 30), create the need for orientation. "Agitation or unsettlement is the basic mood of orientation" (ibid.).

### 6. Opportunities, Goals, Horizon, Perspectives, and Standpoints

In my methodological writings related to music analysis, I have been insisting on the importance of formulating goals and research questions before pursuing the analysis. (See, for example, Schüler 1996.) But orientation does not begin with such goals. Orientation "begins with the viewing of the situation in order to look for promising options and opportunities for action", which Stegmaier also calls "finding meaning" (p. 36). Once we have an idea of promising options and opportunities, we formulate goals, i.e. we decide on the goals. We decide on some goals, and thus against others.

We look for an overview of the situation. When the view is unclear, we are unsettled. When the view is clear, we are calm. However, when the view is clear, we only pay attention to what is in sight. When something becomes clear to us, we lose sight of other possibilities (p. 38). Stegmaier points out another paradox: When we try to see the "bigger picture" or the big overview, we cannot focus anymore on something specific. We see everything and nothing. And when we focus on something specific, we exclude everything else (p. 39). An old saying is that we can't see the forest because of all the trees. That is why different perspectives are necessary: different degrees of the overview (different views). We also need to do that in music analysis: we need to change perspectives; we need to change the focus, degrees, and angles at and from which we look at music. Most importantly, we will have to find the connections between those different views, perspectives, and oscillations (p. 40).

Werner Stegmaier uses the terms "horizons", "standpoints", and "perspectives" in his Philosophy of Orientation as classic terms. The "horizon", meaning "a limiting circle", limits an overview (p. 43). Without going into detail, the horizon helps us distinguish between center and periphery; the horizon is "a spatial boundary, but only for a certain time – it is a moving boundary. Horizon is where orientation ends; but behind every horizon, a new horizon arises" (p. 44). The "standpoint" is "the (metaphorical) 'point' one 'stands' on in a horizon and from which one sees and understands what one can see or understand within this horizon" (ibid.). We can enter or "adopt" a standpoint, but we can also leave or "abandon" it; this even allows for multiple standpoints. If we have not studied a particular music-analytical approach or methods, for example, it is outside of our horizon, and we will not be able to use it for our orientation. If all we have always done is pursue one kind of analysis, it determines our limits.

### 7. Scientific vs. Artistic Orientation

Stegmaier points out that science, art, and religion "create much larger leeways in the engagement with their objects" (p. 183). Science can distance itself from the everyday need of survival and can take on a "theoretical point of view", which means that the observational standpoint may, by itself, not be part of the observed world (ibid.). Science can design theories that limit the use of signs with rules and definitions. "In contrast to science, art expands the use of signs in a way that makes it fluid; bringing about creative disorientation, it enriches human orientation through fictional orientation worlds" (p. 184). Since our scientific focus is art, music analysis should either focus on those reorientations that attractive musical works are based on, which means the creative processes, or it needs in its approaches and methods constant re-orientations to capture the artistic re-orientations. Artistic orientations and re-orientations "invent" something new. As such, it is different than everyday orientation. And in contrast to science, which limits the use of signs, art aims to constantly change signs and limits. "Art composes surprising orientation worlds" (p. 194). Therefore, music analysis must also focus on the fluidity of signs in art, must focus on the reorientations that enable the changing music worlds, and it must focus on the elements of music that change to make art surprising. Music theory that focuses on a set of rules in perpetuity will fail; it needs to focus on the *changing* of rules, on the *changing* of the musical elements, etc. And because artistic reorientations receive strong influences from the everyday world, we must also look at those elements that are less "pure" musical elements: social, political, psychological elements, etc.

### Final Remarks

Many processes in pursuing music analysis require orientation:

– choosing the music (excerpts) / identifying the problem;
– formulating research questions (with target groups in mind);
– deciding on the best sources (such as scores or recordings, for example);
– choosing suitable analytical processes / approaches / methods;
– keeping in mind the balance between objectivity and subjectivity in approach / method;
– hypothesizing on analytical elements / results;
– collecting appropriate data (analytical process);
– balancing the focus on various musical elements;
– deciding on when to end data collection;
– accepting, rejecting, or modifying the hypothesis when reviewing analytical data;
– repeating previous steps if necessary;
– evaluating data / deciding on which data to use for the presentation or publication;
– deciding on presentation balance for various target groups;
– finding suitable modes of presentation (of analytical results);
– critically reviewing both, method and results;
– providing a critical outlook; etc.

The success of our music-theoretical or analytical endeavors depends on our orientation in our globalized, multi-modal, inter-disciplinary, and ever-more digitized world with a sheer vastness of kinds of music and with a sheer vastness of research methods. We will professionally only move with our time if we reflect on our current orientation skills and develop new ones (see Stegmaier 2019: xii).

### Literature

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### Orientacijos procesai ir perspektyvizmas muzikos analizėje

#### Santrauka

Muzikos teorija, kaip disciplina, tapo be galo įvairialypė, su daugybe muzikos analizės metodų. Kiekvieno tyrimo rezultatai priklauso nuo pasirinktų metodų, o pastarųjų pasirinkimas dėl jų tarpdiscipliniškumo ir diversifikacijos darosi vis labiau komplikuotas. Šiame straipsnyje monumentali Wernerio Stegmaier „Orientacijos filosofija" (Stegmaier 2008) pritaikoma orientacijos ir perspektyvumo procesams tyrinėti muzikos teorijos srityje (filosofas W. Stegmaieris pirmasis sistemiškai ir suprantamai aptarė orientacijos sąlygas ir struktūras, įskaitant mokslines / tyrimų orientacijas). Orientacija yra būtina bet kurioje naujoje situacijoje. Orientacijos ir perspektyvos keitimo procesai tyrimuose yra būtini, tačiau pernelyg dažnai jie vyksta nesąmoningai ar netiksliai. Pirminiai orientavimosi sprendimai, pasak Stegmaierio, dažnai yra atliekami esant abejonei, spaudžiant laikui ir nulemia vėlesnius sprendimus. Jie, žinoma, apima ne tik tyrimo (analitinių) metodų pasirinkimą ir pritaikymą, bet ir muzikos pavyzdžių, ankstesnių tyrimų ir jų tąsos pasirinkimą ar tam tikrų tyrimo nišų atradimą, tyrimo hipotezių ir tikslų formulavimą, duomenų rinkimą, jų atranką ir aptarimą.