

Review

Guidelines for Style Analysis, by Jan LaRue. Expanded second edition, with *Models for Style Analysis*, a companion text. Edited by Marian Green LaRue. Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2011.

First published by W.W. Norton in 1970, Jan LaRue's *Guidelines for Style Analysis* was a landmark accomplishment. It offered an all-purpose guide for dealing with some of the most urgent questions we are likely to face as we attempt to talk or write coherently about music: What are the distinctive traits of a particular composition, and what makes it hold together (or not)? What are the defining properties of its composer's idiom, and how does that idiom relate to the musical customs of the historical period to which it is connected? What special materials are at the composer's disposal, and how are they deployed? And, in what ways can the composer's accomplishment be appraised by performers, listeners, or critics of musical style?

A revised second edition, issued by Harmonie Park Press in 1992, retained the original text essentially intact, while adding substantial material in the form of discursive endnotes plus an appendix that constitutes a gold mine of advice on writing about music. Embedded within the endnotes were references to a forthcoming companion volume, to be entitled *Models for Style Analysis*. Its purpose would be to enhance the value of the *Guidelines* by presenting a constellation of analyses fashioned in accordance with the book's precepts. The new publication (2011), described on the title page as an expanded second edition, fulfills the 1992 edition's promise by including a 100-page supplement (in the form of a CD ROM tucked in the back cover) in which fifteen short compositions are analyzed. The reissuing of *Guidelines*, now accompanied by the long-awaited *Models*, stands as an affirmation of the enduring usefulness of the text and its unique insights, elegantly simple yet powerful in their efficacy as the basis for a style-analytical method.

Proceeding from an understanding of music as sound in motion, with temporal imperatives to be recognized at every juncture, the method proposes that we can account for the ingredients of almost any musical experience in terms of four constituent elements:

1) *sound*, including (but by no means limited to) orchestration, timbre, register, dynamics, and sonorous density—in effect, everything other than pitch or duration;

2) *harmony*, broadly defined to embrace not only the simultaneous occurrence of pitches but also the phenomenon of pitch successions that form a more or less cohesive, homogenous entity (for example an arpeggiation, a key area, a twelve-tone row, or the modal configuration of a monophonic plainchant);

3) *melody*, encompassing everything heard as line in a musical fabric; and

4) *rhythm*, a vast, multifaceted category that includes all aspects of duration.

A fifth element, which subsumes what is generally understood in analytical discourse as *form* (of a phrase, a theme, or a composition as a whole), is given the alternative label *growth* in an attempt to capture the dynamic unfurling of musical designs in time—an antidote to restrictive notions of musical forms as motionless objects, readily detachable from the musical action that flows within them. Growth as a style-analytical category does indeed encompass externally imposed templates and customary formulas—binary form, for example, or the standard minuet-trio stereotype—but, more vitally and pervasively, it has to do with the play of elements whose

interactions give rise to musical trajectories of all sizes and to the forces of punctuation that serve to link or separate them.

Analytical procedures involved with isolating the five elements are joined by the need to distinguish among the different dimensions (large, middle, and small) that those elements inhabit. Harmony, for example, may involve a progression of chords within a phrase (small dimension), modulatory schemes within a principal section of a piece (middle dimension), or the tonal organization of a composition in its entirety (large dimension).

A third facet of style-analytical method concerns the difference between movement and shape—between those ingredients that direct our attention to the flow of events in time and those that we recognize as building blocks, landmarks, or components of the imaginary architecture formed from our recollection of musical events once they have passed. According to LaRue's movement/shape dichotomy, change (of sonority, harmony, note duration, or any other element) will yield an impression of motion. Degrees of perceived motion will naturally vary from one segment of a composition to another, and quickening rates of change will produce a sense of acceleration or direction toward a goal. Movement most directly involves our local, event-by-event encounter with the music; but even as that encounter is taking place, sources of movement may be heard to order themselves in our memory as recurrent patterns, points of contrast, or boundary lines between phases of motion—in other words, as agents of musical shape in the process of being formed. Key aspects of the characteristically fluid, reciprocal relationship between movement and shape are readily illustrated by a passage from the opening of a keyboard sonata by Mozart, K. 311 (1777), measures 1-16 (see Example 1).

Example 1 W. A. Mozart, Keyboard Sonata in D, K. 311, first movement, mm. 1-16.

Capital letters above the treble staff represent standard abbreviations for thematic functions: Primary (P); Transitional (T); Secondary (S). Lowercase letters designate activity on the level of phrase (a, b) and subphrase (x, y, z, w). Rhythmic notation below the bass staff represents the repeating units of the modular rhythm that informs the passage.

8. Sonate in D
KV 311 (2849)

The image displays a musical score for the opening of Mozart's Keyboard Sonata in D, K. 311. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked 'Allegro con spirito' and 'Pa'. The second system is marked 'a' and 'b'. Below the bass staff, there are rhythmic notations consisting of circles and lines, representing repeating units of the modular rhythm that informs the passage.

Sources of movement at the outset, including a succession of changes in textural density, register, and surface rhythm, all help to propel the treble line's declarative, twofold rise and fall through the end of measure 6, at which point this concerted primary-theme action has yielded a clearly defined musical shape (Pa a; 3+3). The rhetorical bluster of the initial exclamation and the sharply contrasting gestures that follow give way in measure 7-10 to the animated fluency of melodic balance and surface-rhythmic continuity (Pb b¹; 2 + 2); and the impression of freshly streamlined activity is magnified by what may be described as a quickening of the modular rhythm from 3 + 3 to 2 + 2. In effect, the succession of small-dimension shapes, or modules (Pa a b¹), has become a source of movement on a higher plane of action. Further acceleration informs the transitional material that follows in measures 11 and 12 (Tax x¹), for not only has surface-rhythmic activity risen to a continuous string of sixteenth notes, but the larger sense of increasing motion through shrinking structural units (now 1+1) has intensified. The pace of events becomes still faster in measures 13-14 (Tay y), where each one-measure unit divides into half-measure particles (the harmony of the second half of the measure duplicates that of the first; the melodic figure on beat 3 is a transposition of that heard on beat 1); measure 15 further accentuates the propulsion from one-measure to half-measure units (Taz z), an effect compounded by the urgency of acceleration from half-measure to quarter note-size nuggets of harmony and melodic profile. The ineluctable scheme of progressively compressed modules climaxes in the first half of measure 16 (Taw), where the pace of chordal impacts increases from quarter notes to eighths. Here, with simultaneous shifts in motion from sixteenth and quarter notes (m. 15) to eighths (m. 16), surface rhythm and the whittled-down particles of modular rhythm converge: a decisive point of culmination and a major mid-section landmark prior to the start of the secondary theme in the dominant at measure 17.

Two basic points about the style analysis method stand out here in relief: first, the explanatory power that we can unleash by viewing a musical fabric in terms of its component elements (sound, harmony, melody, rhythm, and the growth process that arises from their interaction); second, the special, outsized significance of rhythm as a style-analytical category. Indeed, rhythm and movement are in some ways virtually synonymous, for to contemplate patterns of change is to confront the manifold intricacies of rhythm, not merely in the sense of note values on the page, but rhythm of all kinds: harmonic rhythm, tonal rhythm, sonority rhythm, texture rhythm, and melodic-profile rhythm, to name just a few. A growing awareness of rhythm's importance and potential complexity led to LaRue's inclusion of some densely packed reflections on this element in the endnotes to the *Guidelines*' 1992 edition (pp. 261-81). Here we encounter the phenomenon of rhythmic cycles and sub-cycles, the complex anatomy of the musical beat, and an expanded outlook on rhythm as "patterns of tension/relaxation within larger patterns of tension/relaxation in all elements and dimensions of music" (p. 276).

Along with such complications comes a vastly widened field of potentially significant observations; and in such an enriched analytical environment, the danger of overload becomes a pressing concern. The design of the *Models for Style Analysis* that now accompanies the text was guided by the need to impose order on large quantities of analytical data. The new supplement provides a kind of roadmap through the domain of analytical application by focusing on a selection of compositions chosen to represent a variety of different historical periods, compositional techniques, and artistic vantage points (see Table 1). The analyses of these pieces demonstrate key features of the method by applying a starkly consistent procedure in which observations are recorded in tabular format according to the scheme shown in Figure 1.

Table 1 Compositions analyzed in *Models for Style Analysis*

- Gregorian chant – Kyrie IX (*Liber usualis*, p. 40)
- Thirteenth-century Latin motet – *Dominator – Ecce – Domino* (ca. 1225)
- Guillaume de Machaut, *S'il estoit nulz* (ca. 1350)
- Giovanni da Florentia, *Nel mezzo* (ca.1350)
- Gilles Binchois, *De plus en plus* (ca. 1440)
- Josquin des Prez, *Tu pauperum refugium* (after 1505)
- Anonymous, *My Lady Carey's Dompe* (ca. 1525)
- Giovanni Gabrieli, *Sonata pian' e forte* (1597)
- Arcangelo Corelli, *Sonata in E Minor, Op. 5 No. 8/i* (1700)
- George Frideric Handel, "Ev'ry Valley," from *Messiah* (1742)
- Joseph Haydn, *Sonata No. 4, Hob XVI/G1* (before 1766)
- Robert Schumann, *Das verlassne Mägdelein*, Op. 64 No. 2 (1847)
- Claude Debussy, *Des pas sur la neige* (Preludes, Book I No. 6 (1916)
- Anton Webern, *Piano Variations, Op. 27/ii* (1936)
- Varèse, *Density 21.5* (1936)

Large

Shape

Movement

	Sound	
	Harmony	
	Melody	
	Rhythm	
	Growth	

Middle

Shape

Movement

	Sound	
	Harmony	
	Melody	
	Rhythm	
	Growth	

Small

Shape

Movement

	Sound	
	Harmony	
	Melody	
	Rhythm	
	Growth	

Figure 1 Standard template for observations in *Models for Style Analysis*

The notion of fitting our observations into a seemingly rigid set of pigeonholes might seem like an inhibiting constraint at first glance. But, when applied with due attention to the fluidity and multifaceted nature of the musical materials being examined, the method readily proves to be a source of liberation as it obliges us to impose systematic choices and controls on our analytical procedures. In addition to the logically arranged observations, each model analysis is supplied with a *timeline*, a horizontal, proportionally accurate representation of a composition's salient thematic events and harmonic design. The timelines add further clarification by specifying the location and relative weight of structural punctuations.

By no means comprehensive in scope, the model analyses serve to highlight a sampling of analytical points relevant to each of the musical styles in question. Along the way, revealing insights are legion. In the Binchois chanson, for example, the palpable sense of directional motion induced by the treble part's pattern of interval expansion within a series of rising and

falling melodic contours; in the Gabrieli sonata, the punctuating function of full sonority at loud volume to close each of the work's three sections; in the early Haydn sonata movement, a marked coordination of surface rhythm and melody to achieve a sense of continuity from one section to the next; in Debussy, the sense of movement generated through changes of harmonic color; and, in the Varèse piece, the control of melodic motion through the coordinated effect of rising lines, a progressively higher tessitura, and increasingly high melodic peaks.

However revealing in and of themselves, such points are merely preliminary to the ultimate goal of any style-analytical enterprise, the pulling together of observations to form stylistically significant conclusions. This is naturally the most challenging phase of the process, and potentially also the most creative and rewarding. Here the analyst must sift through the ordered lists of observations in search of telling connections that might lead toward useful, summarizing generalizations, always keeping in mind the importance of representing the music being examined as an interrelated whole. Thus, the conclusion phase for the Gabrieli analysis features evidence of a kind of style stratification—a certain coexistence of modern concepts of structure and musical punctuation with aspects of melodic profile and dissonance treatment that sustain habits from an earlier generation. Conclusions drawn from the analysis of Webern's Op. 27/ii focus on ways in which the piece seems bent on redefining certain customary assumptions: chords are textures, not harmonies; dissonance is timbre, not tension; pitches are register patterns, not melodies; rests are not points of discontinuity but integral ingredients of a continuous musical fabric. And, for Varèse's *Density 21.5*, conclusions center on the composer's extraordinarily resourceful control of line, dynamics, and rhythm, by which cohesion and continuity are achieved virtually without recourse to repetition or recurrence.

As noted in the editor's preface to *Models* (p. vii), the idea of such a companion text goes back to an early phase in the writing of *Guidelines*. But, even as the ingredients and organization of the main book crystallized, questions remained about the intended scope and depth of detail to be embraced by the supplementary volume. There had been a notion, still in play at the time of the book's 1992 edition, that the *Models* might encompass a large compendium of examples, with detailed analyses for each, all presented in tandem with a comprehensive set of analytical cue sheets to cover the entire range of recognized historical periods. This would have been immensely instructive. However, from a pedagogical standpoint it might well have proved counterproductive, taking us by the hand at the very point where we should have been urged to develop our own analytical skills. In this view, the deliberately open-ended, rough-hewn texture of the *Models* in its final form may be seen as something far preferable: a diverse collection of analytical sketches, each filled with illuminating insights and tantalizing possibilities rather than comprehensive explanations. As LaRue notes in the final chapter of *Guidelines*, "good analysis requires an active imaginative approach: we look and listen to improve an evolving hypothesis concerning the growth of a piece, testing, correcting, and replacing one possibility after another" (pp. 227-30). Analysis undertaken in this spirit is a kind of performance (p. 230), whose ultimate objective is "not a single truth but rather a broad avenue toward informed sensitivity, a heightened awareness of musical potentialities" (p. 239). Drawing on LaRue's own deep experience with the methods of style analysis, the *Models* may be welcomed as an invaluable complement to the *Guidelines*, its sample observations and conclusions serving as points of departure for the reader's own creative endeavors within a virtually unlimited realm of analytical possibility.

FLOYD GRAVE