

Reviews

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Prolongation of Seventh Chords in Tonal Music, by Yosef Goldenberg. Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 2008. 597 pp. (2 vols.)

Goldenberg's subject is a conceptual and theoretical-systemic issue of perennial importance to Schenkerian analysts: the problematic status of dissonant prolongation in Schenker's theory, and the inconsistency between Schenker's theoretical pronouncements, which famously deny the existence of the phenomenon, and his analytical practice, which often appears to incorporate it in striking fashion. It is not Goldenberg's goal to resolve this conflict, which would in any case not be possible. At one point, he takes aim at "[the] trend toward reconciling statements in Schenker's writings, which are either inconsistent with one another or which do not correspond to our own perceptions, sometimes [creating] the impression that a battle is being fought to defend the 'holy scriptures' of music theory" [72]). Rather, his purpose is systematically to explore, through rigorous empirical investigation deriving from a sympathetic, though not uncritical, close reading of Schenker, the possibilities and limitations of the phenomenon.

Although this is (to my knowledge) the first book-length study of the topic, Goldenberg is the latest of many to weigh in on the subject. Within the Schenkerian tradition, we find represented a myriad of viewpoints on and interpretations of Schenker's own stance (more on this below). Outside of the tradition (perhaps, more accurately, inhabiting an extended offshoot from it), have been some wide-ranging investigations of the phenomenon of prolonged dissonance ("PD") in general. Goldenberg stands out from the first group by virtue of his sharpness of focus on the problem at hand. He differs from the second group through his self-imposed limitations on: 1) the object of study (seventh chords only); and 2) its musical repertoire—common-practice tonal of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, largely (though not entirely) excluding "transitional" repertoire between tonal and post-tonal practices.

The book, which has its origins in the author's Hebrew University PhD dissertation, follows the general plan of moving from considerations of theoretical background (chapters 1–3) to detailed demonstrations of compositional practice (chapters 7–10). Chapters 4–6 bridge the gap between the two perspectives in their consideration of more generalized questions of theoretical consistency and their relevance to analysis. In the best Schenkerian tradition, the two-volume format (text and examples) is most helpful for ease of reading.

In chapter 1 ("Basic Concepts and Definitions"), the author lays down strict conditions for the existence of prolongation: 1) an independent chord (more specifically, tertian sonority), structurally subordinate to the prolonged harmony; 2) the subordinate chord's sufficient duration (defined as one complete unit of the prevailing harmonic rhythm). It is precisely this departure from the literal presence of the prolonged harmony that clearly distinguishes real prolongation from the elementary chord-extension techniques, such as "stretching," diminution, and space-filling motion ("SFM"). Less clear is the author's attempt at a hard-and-fast distinction between prolongation and the

Schenkerian concept of *composing out*, in his proposal of an unusually narrow definition of the latter (as “filled-in horizontalization”) that would exclude techniques such as neighbor motion and mixture (7–8).

Different kinds of prolongation are distinguished: all prolongation is “circular” (“[relating to] a single event at deeper levels”), but only “full” when it departs from and returns to the same basic sonority. (For what it’s worth, I find this terminology counter-intuitive, and would reverse these meanings—of the two terms, isn’t “circular” the one with more obvious connotations of returning to the same point?) Prolongation that is circular but not full (in Goldenberg’s sense) necessarily entails *subordination*, either forward- or back-relating. While the converse of prolongation is *transitive progression*, the former can of course absorb the latter at a lower level.

Chapter 2 (“Problems Concerning Prolongation of Seventh Chords”) considers theoretical and logical arguments against the existence of such prolongations, as well as grounds for their justification. For Goldenberg, a major sticking point in conceiving of seventh chords as independent harmonies, and a recurrent motif throughout the book, is the problematic status of the intervallic step between the chordal seventh and root, contravening triadic tonality’s clear systemic distinction between the roles of steps (voice leading) and skips/leaps (arpeggiation).

Schenker’s normative view, of course, was that the seventh chord is not an independent harmony; like any other dissonance (or rather, *untransformed* dissonance), its prolongation is prohibited—though dissonance at one level could of course receive consonant harmonic support at another. However, whichever way we slice it, many of Schenker’s own analyses appear to contradict this basic edict. Although it does not resolve the contradiction (nor is it considered by Goldenberg), I have often wondered if Schenker intended the prohibition to apply in a narrower sense than the one he actually projected to the world, through a certain conceptual slippage between the phenomena of prolongation and tonicization (at the risk of being consigned to Goldenberg’s “Group C,” or those who would “deny the conflict”—see commentary on chapter 3 below). I refer here to the important distinction between prolonging a chord by *contrapuntal* means, via linear progressions, neighboring motion etc., and *harmonically*, via its own cadential progression. While the existence of prolongation of seventh chords by the former means is hard to dispute, on the evidence of the tonal repertoire of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and Schenker’s own analyses of much of it, notwithstanding his dogmatic pronouncement to the contrary—chord prolongation in the latter sense is clearly valid only for consonant triads, given the impossibility of tonicizing any dissonant sonority. In this connection, Goldenberg cites one intriguing example associated with prolonging a V7 chord, in Brahms’s Symphony No. 2/i, mm. 133–55—a quasi-cadential progression “I–IV–V–I,” where every function is represented by a chord of dominant-seventh structure (p. 184 n. 426). This procedure, however, is clearly quite exceptional. In any case, as Goldenberg reminds us, we should never underestimate the role of polemic in Schenker’s theoretical stance: against Schoenberg and the “emancipation of dissonance,” and Rameau; as well as the intensity of his antagonism toward modern music in general, with strict counterpoint in the role of the “dam that (. . .) holds back the modernist flood” (45).

Goldenberg considers certain “theoretical gaps” in which the seeds of prolonged dissonance might take root: for instance, in strict counterpoint, the decorated suspension

in fifth species, or the “consonant” status of diminished 6/3s in three voices. In a similar vein, the roots of prolonged dissonance might be detected in recognition of two different kinds of passing tritone: “real” (descending passing motion in an implied V–I context) versus “apparent” (ascending passing motion in an implied IV–I context, where, from the point of view of tonal syntax, the consonant IV is subordinate to the dissonant passing “VII”; obviously, such a perspective takes us well beyond the world of strict counterpoint).

Chapter 3 (“Literature Survey”) explores historical precedents for seventh-chord prolongation in the theoretical thinking of Heinichen, Kirnberger, and Rameau (!), as well as some early twentieth-century non-Schenkerians (Bruckner student Cyril Hynais, Louis and Thuille, Lenormand, Kurth). As Goldenberg’s survey of Schenker’s published writings emphasizes, his own view underwent evolution—from regarding seventh chords as harmonies in their own right (*Harmony*) to incidental non-harmonic products of passing motion (*Counterpoint II* to *Free Composition*). A detailed survey of the positions of Schenker’s followers finds a spectrum of opinions that can be broken down down into four categories: Group A (“adhering to strict prohibition”—Oster, Jonas, Rothgeb, Laufer); Group B (“abandoning strict prohibition”—Mitchell, Rothstein); Group C (“denying the conflict”—Schachter, Clark, Brown); Group D (“ignoring the normative view”—Katz, Salzer, Lerdahl & Jackendoff). The author goes on to consider studies of prolonged dissonance in general, in the context of both tonal music (Morgan, Clark, Larson, Stein, Williamson, Satyendra) and post-tonal/twentieth-century repertoire (Katz, Salzer, Travis, Baker, Straus, Forte, Väisälä). These discussions are unfailingly probing and insightful.

From a theoretical perspective, I find the most original part of the book to be chapter 4 (“Seventh Chords at the Deepest Structural Levels”). The author explores the implications of an overlooked theoretical problem, hinging on the tension between an unprolonged *Urfinie* and a prolonged bass line: the implicit presence of prolonged dissonance at the deepest level in the unsupported $\wedge^4$ – $\wedge^2$ stretch of a $\wedge^5$ - or $\wedge^8$ -line. Given that the pre-dominant harmony (IV or II) supporting $\wedge^4$ is ultimately subordinate to the following V supporting $\wedge^2$ (according to the priority of I–V bass arpeggiation at the deepest level), at the background level the upper voice’s $\wedge^4$ – $\wedge^2$ third-descent therefore represents prolongation of V7. The question then arises as to the real resolution of the seventh: $\wedge^4$ is left hanging, unresolved by the upper voice’s continued descent to $\wedge^1$, and therefore must conceptually resolve via registral displacement to an inner-voice $\wedge^3$ below $\wedge^1$ —cf. examples such as the opening theme of Mozart’s “Haffner” Symphony (Goldenberg’s Example 4.4b). A further ramification of this logic is the undermining of Schenker’s idea of *consonant preparation* of the seventh by IV or II in another context, that of complete $\wedge^3$ – $\wedge^4$ – $\wedge^3$ neighbor motion. According to Goldenberg, this constitutes a “confusion of levels” (91–94; here and elsewhere, the author’s absolutist perspective may strike some as excessively zealous, but the theoretical problem is a real one). Less compelling, to my mind, are some further extrapolations concerning $\wedge^4$ before an interruption—perhaps inventing a problem where none really exists: the lower-level connecting chordal seventh following an interruption V is a very commonly encountered feature (whether taking the form of a passing 8–7, which the author represents unproblematically in his later Example 6.6, or an arpeggiating 5–7, as problematized in Example 4.19d). Example 4.19c (Mozart’s Rondo in D, K. 485) complicates the picture

unnecessarily by assigning $\wedge^4$ to the level of background, where it does not belong. (Despite its title, this piece is [as the author doubtless knows] an unambiguous sonata form, with each half repeated. Accordingly, the upper voice from the second half of the exposition through the end of the development prolongs $\wedge^2$, not $\wedge^4$, which enters only as a lower-level [5–7] connection to the recapitulation. Assigning a *Kopft*on of $\wedge^5$ to reflect that pitch's obvious dominance of the main theme does not alter the essential conformity of the voice leading to sonata-formal norms [though it does have the effect of demoting the exposition's $\wedge^3$ – $\wedge^2$ motion to a deep-level inner voice]: $\wedge^5$ would simply be retained through the beginning of the recapitulation, descending to $\wedge^4$ in the tonic reprise of the second theme, and not before. In this connection, see Oster's editorial insertion into § 316 of *Free Composition* [p. 139].)

Further sections in this chapter address ascent from the chordal seventh by reaching over (though the relevance of this technique to prolongation of the seventh at deeper levels was not entirely clear to me); deep-level unfolding of the $\wedge^4$ – $\wedge^7$ tritone; deep-level dissonance arising from the (un-rectified) mixture of $\wedge^2$ (as in Chopin's Nocturne in c-sharp, Op. 27/1, Goldenberg's Example 4.22c); the priority of diatonic dissonance over chromatic consonance; and middleground tonicization (the presence of applied V7s at the deeper middleground, a familiar example being V7/III in the exposition of minor-mode sonata form).

The first part of chapter 5 ("General Overview of Prolongation of Seventh Chords") provides a comparative investigation of seventh chords according to different types (qualities) and possible functions, assessing each one's conduciveness to prolongation (e.g. the rarity of prolongation of IV7, or any chord with a major seventh). The second part of the chapter explores the subject of seventh progressions. While broadly concurring with Oster's criterion for true versus illusory seventh progressions (the former descending, with seventh present from the beginning; the latter ascending, with seventh attained only at the end, composing out an inverted second), the author's nuanced discussion offers valuable refinements and demonstrations of possible exceptions.

Chapter 6 ("Procedures for Providing V7 with Structural Meaning without Full Circular Prolongation") focuses on situations of one-way (forward- and back-relating) subordination to V7: those where the consonant 8 is subordinated to the dissonant 7, thus negating the seventh's normative status as passing from the octave; the Schenkerian technique of "securing the seventh" (or "gradual transformation" of V to V7—space-filling motion toward the seventh, in the form of the ascending third 5–7 or the [chromatically filled] descending second 8–7); and chordal subordination to V7 (usually IV or II, but other chords theoretically possible).

Not surprisingly, chapter 7 ("Full Circular Prolongation of V7") is the longest in the book, with 115 examples, many of them with multiple subdivisions. Possible linear progressions within V7, from third to octave, are catalogued systematically, including consideration of linear progressions of different sizes in counterpoint. An extensive section on omnibus progressions of various kinds presents an impressively exhaustive treatment of this complex and important prolongational technique. Other topics explored include neighbor motion (including the issue of consonant 7–8–7 embellishment of the dissonant seventh); neighbors and linear progressions in combination; mixture (seemingly unlikely, but absorbing such situations as the chromatic inflection of $\wedge^4$ in

prolongation of V7 by VII sharp-5); reaching over; arpeggiation; equal division of the octave; inversions of V7; and enharmonic parentheses ("EP"), which normally exploit enharmonic equivalence with the German augmented-sixth chord (a topic more fully explored in chapter 10).

The subject of large-scale formal prolongations of V7 brings up Schenker's own most famous examples, from *Free Composition*, of V7 prolonged over the development sections of the first movements of Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony and "Les adieux" Sonata Op. 81a. The author considers these examples at length, providing (here and elsewhere) alternative readings (Examples 7.105b and 106b) that are always intelligent and thought provoking, though (again, here and elsewhere) he does not always resist the temptation to overload these with excessive detail, sacrificing the simplicity and immediacy of Schenker's original concept.

Goldenberg's idea of parallel periods that prolong V7 as an alternative to interruption is certainly an interesting one, but here I find his examples unpersuasive. His reading of the main theme from the finale of Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 (Example 7.110c) relies excessively on an appeal to dynamics and texture (m. 3) in its relegation of the tonic as subordinate to the framing V7. This is unconvincing, and needlessly antithetical to the period principle—an instance of his customary (and generally laudable) sensitivity to such musical aspects pursued a little over-zealously, producing a strained reading (cf. also the main theme from the finale of Brahms's String Quartet in c, Op. 51/1, though here the case for an overriding dominant prolongation is probably stronger). In another example, the main theme from the first movement of Schubert's Piano Trio in B-flat, D. 898 (Example 7.111d), the author has the theme's sequential consequent on II subsumed within a prolongation of V(7) from the end of the antecedent through most of the consequent phrase. An alternative reading, much better attuned to the parallel phrase structure, would understand the consequent's II as a deeper-level pre-dominant function, over and above the antecedent's half-cadential V as a back-relating dominant (cf. also Mozart Sonata in D, K. 576/i, etc.).

Chapter 8 ("Prolongation of Diminished Seventh Chords") again presents a systematic taxonomy of possible prolonging techniques through the different possible chordal intervals (with much emphasis on the variety of apparent consonances that result from passing and neighboring motions within the prolonged chord). Diminished seventh chords offer great scope for enharmonic reinterpretation and suitability for prolongation via the technique of enharmonic parentheses; in this connection, the author stresses the effect on tonal context of altering the scalar subdivisions within the prolonged chord's constituent minor thirds, in terms of the placement of whole tone or semitone as the third's upper or lower interval.

Chapter 9 ("Prolongations of the Remaining Seventh Chords") considers non-dominant-functional seventh chords, as well as the remaining dominant-functional VII7 in its half-diminished major-mode variant (prolongation of which seems to be surprisingly rare). By far the most important of the non-dominant chords is II7, of which the author demonstrates many impressive examples of wide-ranging prolongation (in both major and minor modes, with their different characteristic qualities of supertonic seventh chord). Prolongation of IV7 in minor is uncommon, but rarest of all are prolongations of chords with a major seventh, principally IV7 in major (despite its

potential, recognized by Schenker, for presence at the deep middleground). The author attributes this to the chord's harsher-sounding dissonance.

Chapter 10 ("Prolongation of Augmented-Sixth Seventh Chords") is logical from the perspective of the Schenkerian tradition, which (more than other analytic systems) tends to emphasize augmented-sixth chords' status as chromatically altered seventh chords as a matter of course. As the author observes (269 ff.), Schenkerians also tend to grant these chords a deeper structural status, as powerful articulators of final harmonic boundaries, than the diatonic ones from which they depart (especially [flat-] VI). Enharmonic parentheses is a very prominent technique again, through enharmonic equivalence of the German type with the V7 chord. The author also considers prolongation of other types (principally French, but also with a few instances of those occasional types that do not conform to the standard "nationalities").

Chapter 11 ("Conclusions") points to an interesting historical finding: whereas we might expect or intuit a correlation between the frequency of such dissonant prolongations and the increasing chromatic complexity of late-Romantic musical language, that does not seem to be the case. In fact, the author finds the greatest variety and sophistication of dissonant prolongational treatment not in the late nineteenth-century "progressive" compositional practice of Liszt, Wagner, Bruckner and others, but in earlier common-practice repertoire from High Classicism to Brahms (not in the Baroque period, though, with some exceptions in J.S. Bach). He plausibly attributes this to the characteristic clarity of formal boundaries in this music, as more conducive than Romantic formal ambiguity or "seamlessness" to the effective projection of prolongational spans both consonant and dissonant.

In a valuable appendix, the author provides a detailed list of instances, both explicit and implicit, of prolonged dissonance in the text and examples of *Free Composition*.

One of the book's major strengths is the consistently high quality of its analyses. Goldenberg is a fluent, expert Schenkerian analyst, and his readings display great sensitivity to all aspects of the music, reflected in a penchant for adapting the graphic format to incorporate a wealth of relevant information not usually found in Schenkerian graphs (e.g. dynamics, texture, and orchestration). Among a great many impressive analyses, I would single out the following as particularly imaginative and audacious:

Example 7.16 (Beethoven Symphony No. 9/ii, Trio; chromatic tonicization in the middle of an omnibus progression).

Example 7.115 (Beethoven String Quartet in G, Op. 18/2, iv; an impressive synthesis demonstrating the centrality of the prolonged V7 as an important motive for the entire movement, at various levels and prolonged in a variety of different ways as appropriate to its varied formal contexts).

Example 8.31d (Mozart Piano Concerto No. 24 in c, K. 491/i; an exceptionally adventurous diminished-seventh prolongation, incorporating a stable tonicized island in the midst of its long sinking chromatic descent).

Example 9.6 (Mahler, "Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n" from *Kindertotenlieder*; varied contexts for the prolongation of half-diminished II7 in minor, subtly different in each strophe of the song).

Examples 9.15b, 9.16 (Schumann String Quartet in A, Op. 41/3, i & iv; wide-ranging prolongations of II6/5 in varied formal contexts).

Example 9.18 (Schubert Sonata in C, D. 279/i; quirkily irregular elaboration of equal octave division, each stage tonicized by an auxiliary cadential progression).

Example 10.24c (Bruckner Symphony No. 9/ii; the last example in the book, and an illuminating, and more convincing, alternative to Laufer's well-known analysis of the opening of this movement).

In a work of this size and scope, we would hardly expect all the analyses to be equally convincing. A few of the more questionable ones are:

Example 6.22a (Mozart, "In diesen heil'gen Hallen" from *Die Zauberflöte*): The plagal reading is unconvincing—the metric setting surely does not so drastically override the norms of tonal syntax as claimed (the dominant is de-emphasized, but is still a vital component of the cadential progression).

Example 7.49 (Haydn String Quartet in B-flat, Op. 64/3, i): The author's "problematic verticalization" (stacked fourths) surely misrepresents the bass line, which actually moves twice as fast (eighth-notes in the second halves of mm. 133 and 134), through the circle of fifths.

Example 7.104 (Haydn "London" Symphony/ii): The form is described in terms of sonata form, which the movement emphatically is not, though the analytical point regarding prototype and expansion is sound.

Example 8.13f (Brahms Symphony No. 4/i): The graph implies harmonic motion of the phrase to an HC in m. 17, but the real goal is the tonic at m. 19 (cf. *Free Composition*, Fig. 81/2).

Example 8.20g (Brahms Double Concerto/i): The graph depicts backwards priority in the middle of the passage; surely those 6/4s are consonant, tonicized by applied VII07s?

Example 8.26g (abstract scheme): The major sixth expressed as a diminished seventh seems to imply a bitonal context of an E major/C minor clash—though theoretically possible, I suppose, this is bizarre, and certainly beyond anything conceivable in common-practice tonality.

Example 8.49b (Beethoven Sonata in A, Op. 2/2, i): This is presented as an alternative to the perfectly coherent reading in Example 8.49a, but its prolonged VII07 is implausible in this formal context.

Example 10.7d (Wolf, "Seufzer"): This seems over-complex and excessively abstract in its reliance on enharmonic reinterpretation; even then the point is far from clear (exactly how does the diminished third D-sharp/F-natural resolve?).

Example 10.14 (Beethoven Piano Trio in c, Op. 1/3, i): The alternative readings purportedly show how different interpretations of hypermeter affect the prolongational boundaries. This is a perfectly valid point, but the (arhythmic) graphic notation is inadequate to this task.

Example 10.22e (Mussorgsky, "Be bored"): In the author's re-setting of an original analysis by Michael Russ, the significance of his slight rhythmic recomposition is unclear.

The book is mostly clearly written and free from excessive jargon, an exception to this being its over-use of the clunky terms “de-alteration” and “disalteration.” The latter is defined (p. 244 n. 535) as “simultaneous sharpened and flattened alterations of the same scale degree” (after Kurth, and belatedly defined here only after its unexplained appearance in several earlier examples). “De-alteration,” in contrast, is “motion [from] an altered chord to its diatonic variant” (the definition itself unhelpfully misprinted in the same footnote; it evidently adapts the Russian term “dezalteratzia”). The author’s emphatic insistence that they not be confused is unfortunately illustrated all too well by the very example under discussion (Example 8.45a), where, unless I am much mistaken, he immediately falls straight into his own trap by labeling one as the other!

Analytical notation is quirky, and not always reader-friendly. In figured-bass usage, the author opts for generic in preference to context/key-specific reference. Although not illogical, this can lead to awkward notations such as a (figured-bass) flat for a natural spelling in the score, or a (figured-bass) natural for a sharp spelling, etc. (see, for example, Example 7.7). The examples also consistently include a separate layer of figured bass to indicate individual strands of voice leading in relation to the implicitly retained root of the harmony being prolonged, irrespective of the real sounding bass (and incorporating the idiosyncratic use of the figure “1” to indicate the bass pitch itself, possibly chromatically altered). This often provides an illuminating perspective, though its conjunction with multiple other layers at different levels can lead to an intimidating appearance, over-dense and crowded, which requires much effort for the reader to decipher and assimilate (see, for example, Examples 8.24c; 8.27c; 9.18; 10.24c).

German augmented-sixth chords are referred to consistently as “IV sharp-6/5,” indicating the sixth’s chromatic inflection above the bass. This has a certain logic when its immediate context is the chromatic alteration of a diatonic IV chord (IV natural-6–sharp-6), but otherwise ignores the status of the chromaticism as the altered choral *root*; the more orthodox (and correct) notation sharp-IV6/5 is much to be preferred. Another unusual convention is the abbreviation of chordal inversion “4/2” to simply “2.”

Graphing is usually lucid and vividly communicative of the author’s intent; one small gripe concerns the notation of incomplete neighbors (Example 4.12, etc.), which consistently dispenses with the customary slur connecting the embellishing tone to the one that is being prolonged, to no good purpose that I can discern.

Both volumes have more than their fair share of typographical errors and misprints. Incorrect Roman numerals and bass figures, though irksome, are usually fairly obvious. Otherwise, I detected missing accidentals (often multiply) in the following Examples: 4.17; 5.13; 5.15c; 6.15b; 7.18a/3 & 5; 7.31e; 7.40a; 7.42c; 7.47; 7.54b; 7.72; 7.73d; 7.74d; 7.75d; 7.106; 7.112; 8.13g; 8.23c; 8.27a; 8.27b; 8.27c/2; 8.35; 10.4a; 10.21a. Wrong key signatures can be found in Examples 6.24b; 6.25c; 7.5b; 7.82b; and 8.23d. Wrong key attributions are possibly more contentious, depending on the level being considered, but two glaring examples are Examples 6.25d and 8.8c. Example 7.89f is bedeviled by wrong slurrings. Example 7.97b (alternative bass-line sketch) has an auxiliary cadence departing from a passing 6/4 (!). Example 3.26 is missing altogether.

This study is clearly aimed at an expert Schenkerian readership. As a major contribution to Schenkerian studies, it should be influential for many years to come, for its many theoretical and analytical insights. Remarkably comprehensive in its theoretical taxonomy, it is equally impressive in its command of both a wealth of examples from the

tonal repertoire and the subject's extensive secondary literature. Whoever reads it will come away with an enriched, and greatly deepened, understanding of this endlessly fascinating subject.