



TEXAS SOCIETY FOR MUSIC THEORY

PROCEEDINGS

VOLUME 2

abstracts of presentations from annual meetings

1983 to 1986

*1988 MTA.
3/25-26*

Copies may be requested from

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Texas Society for Music Theory

FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

at Southern Methodist University, Dallas

March 25 - 26, 1983

FRIDAY, MARCH 25

Registration (8:00 - 8:30)

SESSION I (8:30 - 10:00)

Opening Remark: "The State of Music Theory" Gary Wittlich
Indiana University

1) "Multi-level Projection as a Compositional
Process in Tonal Music" Andrew J. Fowler

- - coffee break - -

SESSION II (10:30 - 11:45)

2) "Charles Ives's Robert Browning Overture" John Hilliard

3) "Handel the Dramatist: His Oratorios Saul,
Samson, and Semelle" Jo Renee McCachren

- - luncheon - -

SESSION III (1:00 - 2:30)

4) "Computer Pitch Analysis: A New Approach" Jane Clendinning

5) Pedagogy Workshop:

i) "The Effects of the Soprano Recorder During the
Interval Tasks: An investigation at a
Community College" Lura Davidson

ii) "Another Look at the Augmented Sixth Chord" John W. Wolft

- - coffee break - -

SESSION IV (3:00 - 5:00)

6) "The State of the Art in Music CAI: a Lecture-
Demonstration" Paul Dworak and J. Timothy Kolosick

- - dinner* - -

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

SESSION V (8:30 - 10:00)

7) "New Music and New Notation: Stimulus to
Improvisation and Insight" Thomas Clark
Performance of works by R. Browne, T. Delio and N. Simon,
by CONSTELLATIONS, NTSU New Music Performance Lab

NEW MUSIC AND NEW NOTATION
Stimulus to Improvisation and Insight

Thomas Clark

The activity of musical experiment---actually making musical patterns in sound and time and combining them into musical structures---is an invaluable pedagogical tool. Not only does it develop aural comprehension but also sparks an understanding of and excitement about musical structure. Students, young musicians, by their nature and background are "doers" who learn music best through attempts to make it.

The sense of discovery in musical experiment through playing and singing is a particularly provocative possibility in the exploration of recent musical styles. Assumptions of limits on structural possibilities are transcended, allowing a true exploration of a rich variety of textural, rhythmic, and tonal modes of organization. Modern styles, in their diversity, vividly portray the workings of musical structure and thereby spotlight the very principles of their operation.

A related advantage to the study and performance of contemporary music is the prevalent element of improvisation. Music designed to allow a large measure of decision making and creative judgement by the performer is particularly stimulating and thought provoking. It also allows less experienced musicians to enter an experimental process at a reasonable level of technical ability. Intelligent, sensible improvisation requires and develops comprehension of musical relationships.

Both the variety of textures and patterns in new music and the high degree of improvisation built into many recent pieces call for a new approach to musical notation. Notational adaptations and even entirely new systems for expressing musical ideas and structures have been developed and utilized by contemporary composers. The use of new and different notations---graphs, pictorial symbols, number sets, pitch boxes, etc.---is a delight for young musicians' eyes and minds. The challenge of interpreting a score that doesn't look ordinary and making musical sense playing it is not only fun but also teaches us to be open-minded and to think logically and inquisitively.

Teaching a new piece that incorporates improvisation and notational "puzzles" involves the following steps:

...questioning the parameters of notational expression---what musical elements are detailed and in correlation with what symbols?

...discovering those elements which are indeterminate to be treated improvisationally and discussing the boundaries of possibilities in their treatment; often this involves stretching notions of limits;

...establishing a language of basic patterns by trying out small ideas in various ways, altering patterns and comparing results until a sense of common "style" is felt;

...combining performers in areas of the piece to develop independence of inflection in improvised action;

...connecting events into whole realizations of the piece by concentrating on individual efforts to achieve continuity and contribute to the collected events in a balanced and perceptive way;

...reflecting on results, discussing balance, connection, dramatic shape and considering alternatives.

These processes were demonstrated by conducting an "open rehearsal" of several contemporary chamber ensemble pieces with musicians from NTSU's New Music Performance Lab. Scores were projected to enable the audience to participate in the discussion and evaluate results.