The Analysis of Popular-Music Forms
hook, groove, riff, verse, chorus...

An Introduction to Structural Hearing in Music

Music 275b (FALL 2015)   **Professor Daniel Harrison**

MW, 9–10:15 in Stoeckel Hall 106   Office: Stoeckel 204
Sections TBD   Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30–4
Teaching Fellows: Marissa Glynias (WR),
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Required Materials

- Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock* (Oxford University Press), ca. $25
- The Variations Audio Timeliner, a software application for both Mac (OSX) and PC. It is "an audio annotation and analysis tool...that can be used navigate music or other audio for detailed study."

The timeliner needs to work on your computer. Its code is antiquated and not being updated at the moment, so some newer machines can balk at running it (Mac, reportedly). Download, read instructions, install and try out, check "known problems" if there's a problem, check with a friend who's more computer-savvy than you if necessary, etc. The computers in the Yale Music Technology Lab (YalMusT) on the fourth floor of Stoeckel Hall have the application installed there. The lab is open 24/7. The Instructors of the course cannot, unfortunately, provide technical support.

I would pay good $$ for a homegrown improvement on this program. CS students, take note...

Available on ClassesV2

- Digital audio sources needed for the timeliner application. See note below.
- Some readings in PDF.
- An BPM applet: tap beats on your keyboard and read the moving average of taps-per-minute.

Note on fair use of digital audio

The audio files on this site are provided solely for the purposes of this course: structural analysis and the demonstration of general concepts of musical organization and composition. After the course is over, please delete those in which you have no further interest; for those you choose to retain as a record of your classwork, please put some money into the system by purchasing another catchy single by the same artists if not the rest of the album.

Requirements

During the course of the term, students will submit **10 training timelines** on an assigned song of increasing complexity, plus **one timeline projection** a freely chosen song accompanied by a **10-minute oral presentation**. **Four analytic papers** are required (with timeline attached). The first is 500 words, the second two are 800 words, and the last is 1700 words. See the schedule below for their due dates.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1	**Introduction to the Course, the Variations Audio Timeliner, and to Musical Meter**
	• **Monday, January 12**: **Introduction –** An overview of the syllabus, the Variations Timeliner tool, and a preview of the course material
	• **Wednesday, January 14: Beat & Meter 1** - Basic concepts and terminology; entrainment and "keeping track"
	Reading Due: Everett, Chapter 1 and pp. 302–8 from Chapter 12, consulting Oxford Press's website for audio examples and photographs. Everett references a lot of songs in his chapters, many of which you won't know (and which I can't call to mind very easily, either—his knowledge is encyclopedic!). Do consult iTunes, Spotify, or whatever other library service you habitually use to preview songs. Remember to buy what you like...
	• **Friday, January 16 (Monday): Beat & Meter 2** - Non-isochrony, "swing," and tuplets. Trying out the Timeliner.
	Assignment Due: Drum-kit Identification assignment in the Resources section.

Week 2	**Musical Texture**
	• **Monday, January 19: No Class (MLK)**
	• **Wednesday, January 21: Groove, Feel, and Instrumentation**
	Assignment Due - Timeline 1: The Kinks, "Tired of Waiting for You" (1965)
	After orienting yourself to 120 BPM and to 4 beats in a measure, mark timepoints at the boundaries between phrases (groups of measures that belong together and that will come back later in the song). The groups come in sizes of 2, 4 and 5 measures only. Timepoints should coincide with noticeable musical events like phrase repetition or a distinctive change from one phrase to the next. Download the audio file to your computer. Start the timeline application and direct it to the audio file. Start timelining! Save every so often to be prudent. Title the file <lastname>_TL1.v2t (The file extension should automatically be added.) When complete, submit only timeline file to your dropbox. (It's an XML text file and not very large.)
Week 3	**Groove; Strophic Form; The Blues**
	• **Monday, January 26: Grouping Principles and the Timeliner**
	• **Wednesday, January 28: 12-bar Blues - I, IV, V; Strophic Form**
	Assignment Due – Timeline 2: Tommy Sparks, "She's Got Me Dancing" (2009)
	Place timepoints for the phrases. In the annotation of each phrase up to about 1:10, indicate whether the phrase is built from (2+2) or 2+2 elements. From about :51 through 1:10, you should analyze each each measure according to the vocal line, so that the phrase will be 1+1+1+1. But put parentheses around measures that are alike, just as with elements. Group the phrases of the song into units (yellow). Using the same principles that determined how phrases grouped into units, group the units themselves into larger sections (orange). In the Edit Properties of the timeliner: make the title <Your Last Name> - <Song title>. Save the timeline to your dropbox on Classes v2 with the file name <Last Name>_TL2.v2t

Week 4	**The Blues (cont'd.); Refrains**

	• **Monday, February 2: Strophic Form; Norms, Deformations, Innovations; 8- and 16-bar Blues**
	
	Assignment Due - Timeline 3: Tracy Chapman, "Give me One Reason" (1996)
	
	• **First level:** Label the blues modules by number: 1, 2, or 3.
	    ○ For the first set of modules with lyrics (0:32–1:02), analyze the element structure in the annotation field as either 2+2 or (2+2).
	• **Second level:** Label the units with one of the following:
	    ○ "Instrumental" if there is no vocal;
	    ○ "Title Verse" for the lyric containing the title phrase;
	    ○ "<Second, Third, Fourth, etc> Verse" to differentiate other lyrics .
	    ○ Starting at 1:03, indicate changes in the groove/instrumentation in the annotation field at this level. Listen carefully and fully into the mix space. Use a "+" to show an addition and "-" for a removal. (For example, +tambourine, -guitar). Assume that additions stay through the next unit unless explicitly removed.
	• **Third level**: Group the units according to some consistent principle that you can articulate and explain. Do not label these groupings, and there is no need to put any explanation of your principle into the annotation field.
	• *Markers*:
	    ○ One verse begins by removing most of the groove for one measure before it is restored. Drop a marker when the restoration happens.In the annotation field, put "groove restored."
	    ○ A particular 3-module has another groove removal and restoration. Drop markers when removed and when restored. Put "groove removed" and "groove restored" in the annotation fields, as appropriate.
	
	• **Wednesday, February 4: SRDC scheme; Refrains; Instrumental breaks**
	
	500-word paper due: Joe Walsh, "Rocky Mountain Way" (1978)
	
	Wikipedia will give you some background on it, and on the composer. These are only a start, of course. Follow the links to get more.
	
	Songs to compare with if you'd like to hear others of its kind: Chicago

Electric Blues; (Spotify links for) Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Johnny Copeland – Albert's Alley, Muddy Waters – Nineteen Years, Old Lillian Offitt – Oh Mama. This music is earthy, powerful, electric, and extremely simple in affect.

This paper is about how the blues is worked into the structure of this song and how the trope of strophic climax is managed.

Timeline - In the timeline, slice four-measure blue segments. Label these blues modules 1, 2, or 3, depending on content. If you would like to subdivide your many "1 module" types by some feature you want to draw attention to, feel free to do so. *Remember as pointed out in class: the blues structure in this song is enlarged and has variant chord motions.*

Group the modules by fours into yellow *double units* as appropriate (= yellows all have same musical content). If they have lyrics, label them as "first", "second" verse, etc. If they are instrumental, decide whether they are building up the riff or whether they are narrating over a stable riff. Find a way to label the units accordingly.

A remarkable feature of the song will suggest how to proceed with the grouping at levels 3 and, if useful, level 4. Labels and descriptions can be added according to your needs.

Groove - In the annotation field of the blues modules, note significant changes to the groove with "+" for an addition (= a new or changed sound) and "–" for a removal. If these happen within a module (i.e., at the element), drop markers and describe the change in their annotation fields. *Drum kit activity should be a focus.*
In the opening riff buildup (to ~0:45), add markers at each noticeable addition to the riff. Describe the addition in the marker's annotation field.

Paper - Your five-hundred word paper (1½ pages) should describe your views of the large-scale organization of this song (timeliner levels 3 and 4), explaining its basis in the lower level groupings and articulations. It should also explain, by virtue of your timeliner work on groove composition, how climax, high-points, and noticeable moments of structural achievement are managed at all levels of the song.

Week 5	<u>**AABA, Verse/Chorus**</u> • **Monday, February 9: Overlap and Elision** *Reading Due***:** Everett, Chapter 6 (Form: Phrases and Sections) *Assignment Due - Timeline 4:* The Zombies, "Time of the Season" (1969) Label the phrases according to formal function: s, r, d, or c Some phrases don't belong to the scheme; there either introduce (label = I) or buffer/separate instances of the scheme (label = J) Group the phrases at level 2 into units that contain complete instances of srdc phrase scheme. Remember: Not all phrases belong! Group those that don't into reasonable (explainable) units. For level 3, group into consistent hyperstrophes insofar as possible. A single level 4 grouping will suggest itself. • **Wednesday, February 11: Verse/Chorus Form** *Assignment Due - Timeline 5*: The Seekers, "Georgy Girl" (1967) This is the main title to a 1967 British film of the same name. The second level can be labeled with S, R, D, and C. For the first level, use labels like a, b, c, d, etc. to denote content (remember: srdc denote function). You can use a prime symbol (') with a letter to show a similar-but-not-the-same relationship with other content. You can comment on these similarities in the annotation field of the bubble. The second and third levels are straightforward; be mindful of unusual articulations at the first level.
Week 6	<u>**Scale and Melody**</u> • **Monday, February 16: More chords - VI, III, and II; Stock Progressions** *800-word paper due*: The Monkees, "Last Train to Clarksville" (1966) In the timeline, identify the function of the first-level phrases with srdc

labels—insofar as they apply. In cases of overlap, label any resulting interlude with "J." In the annotation field, identify the element (or even single-measure) organization in the first-level phrases with 2+2, (2+2), or some other scheme that indicates how the musical material is grouped.

The second-level grouping should label verses by number (e.g., "first verse"). Material that isn't verse you can label as "bridge" if that seems appropriate.

Your paper should discuss how the SRDC scheme is employed in this song at the phrase level, noting any special or remarkable features. It should the consider the applicability of this scheme on the large scale, since it's not obvious that it indeed does. You can argue that it doesn't, but then should provide an account of your own that explains, analyzes, interprets, etc. the organization of the song as a whole. (Is there something about the story told in the lyrics, for example, that is the main influence?) On the other hand, you may hear SRDC at work at the large scale, albeit transformed, fractured, or otherwise obscured. In this case, explain how you hear it that way by identifying and explaining the features that obscure the SRDC scheme.

The third-level grouping in your timeline (and even fourth-level, if necessary) should reflect the reading of the song structure your argue for in your paper.

You can find background about the song and the band in the usual places. If you learn things that guide your interpretation of the structure, feel free to incorporate them into your argument. If not, don't worry. The background is merely a source of guidance whose potential depends on what argument you want to make.

- **Wednesday, February 18: Minor tonics; More contrasting Verse/Chorus**

  Assignment Due - Timeline 6: Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis, Jr., "(You are my) Shining Star" (2008)

  At this point, you don't need a lot of instruction on timelining. The larger units are straightforward; use appropriate labels to analyze them. The phrase level is where the interest is: Analyze how srdc works there, especially as a way to feed into the chorus.

Week 7	**Pentatonicism; Framing Functions**
	• **Monday, February 23: Pentatonic Tonal Systems**
	Assignment Due - Timeline 7: Jaan Arden, "Insensitive" (1996)
	The task in this timeline assignment is to identify three stock progressions:
	1. I— VI— IV— V— (doo-wop) 2. I— III— IV— V— (puff) 3. VI— IV— I— V— (a re-ordering of the Four Chords)
	Listen for the first two progressions at Level 2, and identify them in the annotation field of the level-2 group. The Four Chord progression is on another level; use the annotation field similarly, to indicate where the progression is contained.
	Identify formal functions (e.g., Verse/Chorus, SRDC, 1,2,3) in the usual ways. Be warned about the stretching of a measure by two beats at one place in the song. Drop a marker when this happens. Does this stretching have any form-functional significance?
	• **Wednesday, February 25: Intros and Outros; More Pentatonicism**
	800-word paper due: The Fifth Dimension "Wedding Bell Blues"; Guess Who "No Time"
	This paper compares two songs in relation both to each other and to conventions of song structure and form that you have learned so far. The two songs, different as they are in a number of respects, share unusual features, perhaps to the point of being "two of a kind."
	As in previous papers, use the timeliner application to convey information about form and content—taking care to note difficulties, ambiguities, noteworthy structural and lyric features. The primary focus of the paper is to discuss commonalities in formal treatment and how such treatment differs from usual standards and practices.
Week 8	**Grouping and Segmentation; Modulation**
	• **Monday, March 2: Prechorus and Compound Forms**
	• **Wednesday, March 4: Modulations**
	Assignment Due - Timeline 8: Sheryl Crow, "Soak up The Sun"

		This song has a complex multistage intro and outro, as well as varying relationships between verse, chorus, prechorus, and "J" interlude modules. Also note plusses/minuses in the groove from section to section.
		(SPRING BREAK – No Class March 7-22)
Week 9	**Text/Music Relations**	
	• **Monday, March 23: Text and Music; Lyric Creation**	
	Reading Due: Davis, *The Craft of Lyric Writing*, Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 7–27). An introduction to how professional lyricists ply their trade.	
	Draft of 1700-word paper due	
	• **Wednesday, March 25: Asymmetrical & Irregular Meter**	
	Reading Due: Nathan D. Hesselink, "Radiohead's "Pyramid Song": Ambiguity, Rhythm, and Participation " *Music Theory Online* 19.1 (2013)	
	This is a close look at metrical unclarity in a Radiohead song, and at the various strategies people (i.e., the fan base) have adopted to clarify its structure. Which do you find most convincing?	
	Guide to the article: Skip the beginning, and start by reading paragraphs [4]–[10]. If you're not interested in the band, skim paragraphs [11]–[12], but check back in at [13]; go back to skim until [19], whereupon start reading again to the end.	
	Assignment Due - Timeline 9: Kansas, "Carry On, Wayward Son" (1976)	
	A long song with complex Intro and Outro and unusual form. Listen for and analyze any metrical irregularity in the opening 40 seconds.	
Week 10	**Exceptional Formal Treatments and Their Interpretation**	
	• **March 30 – Unusual Formal Treatments: Long Songs**	
	• **April 1 – Long Songs Continued**	
	1700-word paper due: Listen to The Beatles *Rubber Soul* album (which is available in its own folder on ClassesV2) and read up on its background, context, reception, etc. One of the most admired albums of the last 50 years, *Rubber Soul* has a wide range of style and expression, yet still seems a unified whole. Choose one song to timeline and discuss in the usual way, but also compare/contrast it to a few	

	others on the album that share features of interest with your chosen song (such as form, meter, groove, intro/outro, instrumentation, etc.) The paper will thus have a primary analytic focus on a song and a secondary focus on a set of songs that relate to each other in various ways.
Week 11	**Form in Other Popular Musics** • **Monday, April 6: Calypso & Soca** *Assignment Due - Timeline 10*: The Beach Boys, "Good Vibrations" This song is famously episodic and formally unusual. Container lengths are generally regular, so the main area of analytic interpretation concerns formal functions at the higher levels. *Song choice for final presentation due by beginning of class.* • **Wednesday, April 8: Romanian Folk Music; Marches of JP Sousa**
Weeks 12 & 13	**Form in Other Popular Music (Cont.); Final Presentations** • **Monday, April 13: Cumbia, Reggeaton** • **April 15, 20, 22: Final Student Presentations**