A PHENOMONOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FOUR PIECES

by

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This paper explores the use of phenomenological analysis as prescribed by Lawrence Ferrara.

After a brief explanation of some of the questions and issues leading to a phenomenological

approach, four pieces are analyzed in order to better understand and test Ferrara's technique.

A PHENOMONOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FOUR PIECES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

While working on an analysis project, a colleague recently shared his troubles as he researched different analytical views of György Ligeti's *Requiem.* He shared that although Ligeti had apparently stated that the piece was not serial, he had found an analyst who had gone to great lengths to show that the piece was actually built on serial methods. The discussion brought to mind several research projects done by the author, and a common thread seemed to permeate the majority of the analytical literature. Whether one is reading an analysis of Stravinsky based on Forte's set-theory, an analysis of a Schütz motet based on pre-tonal hexachords, one of Schenker's analytical graphs, or an examination of formal ambiguity in Brahms, the vast majority of the literature focuses on form and structure, even more specifically, structure as determined by the harmonic or motivic content.

Concentrating on the pitch content, or the motivic content of a piece is tempting. The analyst can point to the score and show exactly what they are trying to prove. Motives can be placed side by side and shown to have connections. But what does one do if a piece does not seem to be organized by pitch? How does one approach a piece of electroacoustic music where pitch may not even be decipherable? In short, how should someone approach a piece of music where the analysis can only be approached through the experience of listening to the piece, with no written score to reinforce their observations? This question raises several other questions about the nature of music analysis.

Joseph Kerman points out that analysis of music could be extremely broadly defined.[1] He acknowledges that the majority of analysis papers use a widely adopted theory such as

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[1] Joseph Kerman, "Analysis, Theory and New Music," in *Contemplating Music: Challenges to* Musicology (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 60-112.

Schenker's to validate some sort of theoretical conclusion, but argues that even an analysis with

an extremely informal theory, such as the idea of unity within a work, could fall under the

umbrella of analysis, but that modern theorists have demanded a stricter, more scientific

approach to analysis.[2] This, he argues, has limited the scope of analysis to mere formalistic

criticism:

> No doubt those who practice musical analysis will remain resistant to the idea that what
> they are doing is a limited form of tacit criticism. … All the same, that would be the
> immediate formulation of an observer from some other field of the humanities who might
> be asked to report on their activities. What you call analysis, that observer would say, we
> call formalistic criticism. And he might add some words of admiration and envy for the
> technical expertise with which such criticism can, in music, be carried out.[3]

He goes on to argue, in agreement with Edward T. Cone, that analysis must include criticism

through the use of both theoretical ideas and intuitive knowledge. He further argues that this kind

of analysis is of the most use to both critics and historians.[4]

Laurence Ferrara goes even further than Kerman, by placing the emphasis of musical

analysis on the experience of the analyst as they experience the piece of music in time. He does

this by adding an emphasis on perception over conception. He does not argue for excluding

traditional analysis, and in fact still includes a search for the form and structure of the piece,

which could occur in a traditional way. Instead, he advocates for including an examination of

psychological references, such as emotion or extra musical associations in an analytical method,

while also bridging this with the examination of form and structure.[5] Most importantly, he argues

that the piece of music should come before the method:

> Researchers in music often establish their method first and then examine a musical work.
> With such an orientation, it is very easy to relegate the full significance of a musical work

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[2] Ibid., 66.
[3] Ibid., 67.
[4] Ibid., 68 – 69.
[5] Lawrence Ferrara, *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music: Bridges to Musical Sound, Form, and Reference* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), xiv – xv.

under study to an ancillary position. As the fullness and scope of musical significance recede from a primary position of import, the researcher can become predominantly concerned with executing his method. Afterall [*sic*], for many researchers a rigorous and thorough method … supports rigorous and thorough research. What is missed in this view is the consequence of the substitution of the primary status of music by a method … Methods define the tasks and scope of inquiry into musical significance. As the method replaces the immediacy of the analyst, music comes to mean only what methods allow it to mean. It is the guiding principle of the present study that musical analysis and understanding should be for the sake of the music, not the method.[6]

Ferrara's approach analysis attempts to allow sound to take the primary position. His method was originally created for electroacoustic and atonal music, and it requires several subjective listenings.[7] The number of listenings is not specified, and each listening is followed by a reflection from the analyst. The listenings are to take place in the following order: 1) the first set of listenings is open, meaning that the analyst may respond to the piece in any way. These reflections are essentially narratives of the analyst's experience during the first few listenings.

For the second set, the analyst is to listen for the syntax of the piece. Syntax is used as an alternative word for the form of the piece, perhaps to avoid the connotations that the word form implies. This set is the most formal set of listenings, and they generate a chart of the formal sections. These listenings allow the analyst to decide what traditional method of analysis to use in finding the form, or to choose other means if so desired. If the piece has a score, it would be examined during this set of listenings.

The next set of listenings is an exploration of the semantic and ontological meanings of the piece. This means that the analyst should explore any references to feelings or to extra musical associations, as well as the sounds themselves. Ferrara recognizes that discussing these

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[6] Ibid., xv – xvi.
[7] Lawrence Ferrara "Phenomenology as a Tool for Musical Analysis," *The Musical Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (summer, 1984): 355-73, http://www.jstor.org/stable/742043.

kinds of meaning creates a lot of subjectivity, but feels that the musical work could not be fully understood without considering these types of meaning. However, he does recognizes that semantic and ontological meanings may not be apparent or existent in some pieces. Finally, the analyst completes the last listening, which is once again open, and serves as a summary of the analyst's experience.[8]

Four pieces have been chosen for analysis using Ferrara's method. Two electroacoustic pieces, one with text and one without, in order to apply the method to music for which pitch is not the primary organizing factor; one post-tonal piece, to apply the method to the other type of music it was designed for; and one pre-tonal piece, chosen to stretch the method by applying it to something outside of its designed scope.

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[8] Ibid., 360

Analysis of *The Wild Bull Part A* by Morton Subotnick

Reflection 1: (open)

The piece starts slowly, with individual tones slowly panning between the left and right channels, followed by some percussive noises. Although events begin slowly, the mood is not calm. Instead, it feels as though something important is coming, and so it does. An African beat is played quietly behind sounds that recall bugle calls. As the bugle call brings to mind an image of hunting, it seems as though a hunter is quietly stalking his prey. There are deep, slow sounds as well as quick, birdlike sounds. A steady beat begins, it is reminiscent of the beat from before, but now it is the most prominent noise, and it is interrupted often by seemingly unrelated rhythms until an entirely new rhythm takes over. This rhythm seems to accompany a melody of sorts. The tension is building steadily through dynamics and more dissonant harmonies. The rhythm then seems to stumble and it ceases suddenly. The mood has changed in many ways. The rhythm is no longer pulsing. Instead, the piece almost seems to lose all sense of meter. The sense of meter returns with a bell like noise, and then everything seems to be moving in slow motion, except for some tones that sound like frogs. This mood continues for what feels like a long time after the quick pace of the beginning of the movement. The piece ends with low moans from a trumpet like sound, reminiscent of an elephant.

Reflection 2 (open and syntax)

During the second listening, several distinct sections were found and described in table 1. The hunting imagery is becoming further solidified, making it difficult to hear other potential interpretations. The third listening was done in conjunction with the descriptions used in table 1, and three formal sections were heard. These are shown in table 1 below the description of the textural divisions. Four sections were combined to form the first bracket, four into the second,

one is an elision between the second and the third sections, and then five sections make up the

third bracket.

Table 1.

Textural Divisions	Slow Panning Drones 0:00	Percussion 1:12	Trills Long Tones 1:20	Long Tones 3:00
Sections	1			
Textural Divisions	Rhythm 1 4:45	Rhythm 2 Melodic Bass 5:40	Rise in pitch and dynamic 6:20	
Sections	2			
Textural Divisions	Rhythmic Interruption Pause 8:20	Long Tones 8:30	Bell Tolls 9:26	Trumpet and Bass Tones 10:05
Sections	Elision	3		
Textural Divisions	Aleatoric nature sounds 11:30	Low Trumpet Moans 12:00		
Sections	(3)			

Reflection 3 (listenings for semantic meaning)

Because the sounds seem to be completely synthesized, their meanings, if they have any,

may be more obscured than in a Musique concrète piece. That said, several of the sounds so

closely resemble real world sounds (e.g. frog sounds or drum sounds) that they could be given

the meaning of those sounds. Because this model matches my earlier impressions, I will move

forward with this model. The piece continues to seem to describe some sort of a hunt.

Descriptions of the sounds on a basic level are in table 2 below. The meanings of those sounds

are in parentheses.

Table 2.

Section1:	Animals in the distance A drum circle and horns signaling the beginning of the hunt. Stalking the animals in the woods (The beginning of the day and the hunt)
Section 2:	Energetic drums

	Nature Sounds
	Two distinct rhythms
	(The chase)
Transition:	Stumbling rhythm and pause
	(The Elephant is struck)
Section 3:	Long tones
	Bell tolls
	Mourning trumpet tones with nature sounds
	Low trumpet tones.
	(The Elephant Dies)

Reflection 4 (a description of listening for ontological meaning)

In my earlier reflections, I have been hearing sounds that evoke a hunt. The rhythms which I have called the chase, are raw and aggressive. While these rhythms could be described as primal due to the previously mentioned raw and aggressive nature, the fact that they are made with electronic sounds also makes them intrinsically modern because they are made with modern technology. This gives us a sense, then, that even as the world becomes more modern, we are still aggressive and violent, and even as we progress, we stay in the past. As the violence reaches its peak, the world (nature?) mourns our continued violence. The piece has a clear teleogical direction to the peak reached in section two, but that climax, rather than being celebrated, is mourned. As a race, we look for glory in war and violence, we believe that victory in battle is the climax, but instead of celebrating the victory, the world mourns death.

Reflection 5 (A final open listening)

In this final listening, the form seems very clear. There are 3 distinct sections, the piece does not follow a traditional form, yet the form is integral to the piece. If the sections were played out of order, then the piece would no longer make sense. Sounds that once seemed random seem to now fit into the piece as a whole, and certain sounds clearly foreshadow what is to come, especially an early version of section two's violent rhythm as heard in section one. The

peak at the end of section two now clearly stands out as a loss of control over violence. The

rhythms sound as though they are straining to break from the tempo and from the dynamic. It is

telling, then, that the mourning comes after a loss of control. Is human aggression something

that is healthy until we lose control of it, or is losing control inevitable, therefore meaning that

aggression will always lead to violence? Many more listening's could be done, but I feel that I

have a strong sense of this piece.

<p align="center">Analysis of The Blind Man, by Barry Truax</p>

Reflection 1 (open)

  Blind Man seems to consist of sounds created from the sounds of bells and the sound of a

single voice. There may be some other sources of sound, but those two seem to be the primary

sources. The piece is mesmerizing and meditative. Near the twelve minute point, there are some

new sounds which appear briefly.

Reflection 2 (open)

  Different moods are becoming apparent. The relation of the bells at the beginning of *The*

Blind Man to the rest of the piece is not yet known. It seems that word painting of a sort is a

common mechanism in this piece, which will be something to explore later. It also appears that

before each complete stanza of the poem is read in its entirety, the text is presented in a

fragmented form. Sometimes this text is from the stanza that is about to be read, but sometimes

it is from previous stanzas. Before the reading of the first stanza, there are fragments which come

from several stanzas. The sounds at the 12 minute point which previously seemed entirely new

now appear to have been hinted at throughout. They seem different because they are presented

almost alone, where previously they were far in the background, and never heard as complete

sounds.

Reflection 3 (open and syntax)

These listenings defined 17 textural divisions in seven sections as shown in table 3. Generally speaking, fully spoken stanzas served as formal divisions between sections, but this characteristic became less clear as the piece progressed. Nine distinct sounds were categorized as making up the structure, with some variation within those sounds. Four divisions were combined to make section two, section three is made up of two divisions, section 4 out of two divisions, and section five through seven are made up of three divisions each. These sections are not definitive; arguments could easily be made for different definitions of sections four through six in particular.

Table 3

Textural Division	Bells 0:00	Voice Fragments Bell Drone 1:50	Voice Fragments Bell Drone Slow Pulse 2:10	Extremely Fragmented Voice Bell Drone Slow Pulse 3:00
Sections	1	2		
Textural Division	Stanza Bell Drone Sigh Slow Pulse 4:16	Overtone Drone Slow Pulse Metallic Scraping Sound 4:45	Stanza "Touch" Fragment "Tap" Fragment Slow Pulse Metallic Scrape 6:05	Sigh Fragmented Text Percussive Sounds 6:12
Sections	(2)	3		4
Textural Division	Stanza Percussive Sounds Sigh 7:43	Percussive Sounds Scrape w/ echo 7:59	Stanza Fragmented Text Percussive Sounds Scrape w/ Echo 9:12	Less Fragmented Text Percussive Sounds 10:00
Sections	(4)	5		
Textural Division	Percussive Sounds Fragmented Text 10:59	Fragmented Text 12:15	Stanza Fragmented Text 12:41	Fragmented Text Bell Drone Slow Pulse 13:00
Sections	6			7
Textural Division	Overtone Drone Slow Pulse Metallic Scrapes 13:51			
Sections	(7)			

9

Reflection 4 (syntax)

These listenings attempt to describe more thoroughly the events that happen in the sections described in table 3.

Section One: A multitude of bells are ringing. Some of the lower bells ring out more than the others. As the section progresses, the bells begin to fade out. The fragmented text begins at the end of this section, creating an elision with section two.

Section Two: The fragmented text comes to the forefront as the bells turn into a drone. A slow pulse begins in the bass range. The text fragments mostly come from the first and last stanzas of the poem. The voice becomes even more fragmented, beginning as almost complete phrases and becoming fragmented to the point of only hearing single consonants or vowels. The less fragmented text is still there, but it is far in the background. Finally, the first stanza is read in its completion. The pulse fades into the background, and approximately at the word "sigh" a sighing sound begins appearing.

Section Three: The bell drone begins to have overtones moving over it. The slow pulse continues, and an eerie scraping sound appears. The next stanza is then read in completion. The words "touch" and "tap" repeat over and over, becoming very prominent.

Section Four: More words are added to "touch" and "tap" eliding with the previous section. The sigh reappears, and percussive sounds occur irregularly. Finally, the next Stanza is read in its completion

Section Five: The texture then thins, with irregular percussive sounds. There is also a metallic scraping sound, which is echoed. The voice fades in, and very quickly, the next stanza is read over the thin texture. The metallic scrape continues and the stanza is fragmented in the background.

Section Six: The fragmented text comes to the forefront with only percussive sounds underneath of it. This then reverses, the percussive sounds become the focus, and the fragmented text is barely heard behind it. The text that is heard is extremely fragmented, to the point of being percussive itself. As the text comes back to the front of the texture it becomes the only thing heard until the stanza is read over it.

Section Seven: Immediately, the slow pulse begins under the fragmented text. As the text becomes even more fragmented, the bell drone returns. The texture slowly thins, and the voice fades out just before the metallic scraping sound returns. Near the end of the piece, the bell drone has overtones ringing over it.

Reflections 5 (a combined description of listening for semantic and ontological meaning)

Because the piece is based on a poem, it seems reasonable that the semantic meanings of the sounds are directly or indirectly tied to the text. The meaning of the bells at the beginning is not clear, but when they become a drone, they represent the constant movement of the air. The slow pulse represents the heartbeat of the earth. The voice fragments vary in meaning, but they generally foreshadow the coming stanza, either through repetition of words that will soon appear in the stanza, or through fragmentations that cause the fragments to take on a meaning (e.g. when "tap" and "touch" are repeated, they themselves sound like a tapping cane). The sigh directly represents the wind sighing. The metallic scraping sound could be a variation of the sigh, or the cane scraping along the ground. When the percussive sounds become more prominent, they represent the leaves or the pollen tumbling through the air. Overall, the piece is a musical description of the poem contained within. Therefore, the ontological meaning is directly tied to the listener's interpretation of the poem itself. The poem gives personality to the wind; the wind comes and goes without knowing what it has touched, both because it is blind, and because it

does not want to know. Paradoxically, even though it does not want to know what it has touched, it is described as careful, not moving the frozen tree, but picking up the leaves and the pollen and taking them away forever.

Reflection 6 (a final open listening)

After several listenings and reflections, the sections are now clearly heard. Each section has its own mood, and is comprehensible. The subtle sounds are heard alongside the more obvious ones. The form is free, but is tied to the poem. The number of sections discerned by the listener depends on the number of sections seen in the poem itself. There is not a clear teleogical motion until a stanza is read, at which point it becomes clear that the piece has been moving toward that moment. Through each listening, this makes the direction of the piece clearer. At this point, the piece seems much less random than it did previously, and I feel I have decent understanding of the piece.

<center>Stravinsky's *A Sermon, a Narrative and a Prayer*</center>

Reflection 1 (open)

A first and second open listening reveals a definite feeling of dramatic arc within each movement of the piece.[9] The first and second movements were unified even at the surface level through strong opening gestures in the strings. However, the third movement breaks this pattern with a much gentler opening gesture. It is not entirely different though, as the opening gesture of this movement still opens with strings. In later listenings, exploring a possible reason for this may be worthwhile in order to understand how the movements are unified. If, in fact, they are In the second movement, there seems to be a delineation of instrumentation between when a male is speaking/singing and when a female is singing.

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[9] The divisions of the movements were known ahead of time by the analyst.

Reflection 2 (open)

A third and fourth open listening reveal distinct styles for each movement. The first movement starts slowly. There are interludes between almost every statement of text, perhaps to give time to reflect on the text. This contrasts with the second movement. There are interludes near the beginning of the movement, but as the story develops it also gains momentum, and the interludes get shorter or are replaced with brief dramatic silences. The movement ends with an instrumental passage. As previously stated, the third movement starts much more gently than the other movements. It remains relatively gentle compared to the other movements, and as such it gives the sense that this movement is the relief after the drama and tragedy of the second movement. It also has a very different texture which sounds like canon. Some structural elements are starting to become evident, as such, the time has come to listen for syntax.

Reflection 3 (syntax)

The fifth and sixth listenings focused on textural structure.[10] The structure of any given movement of this piece is related as much to the text as the texture, as such it is worthwhile to show the text here:

Movement 1:
> We are saved by hope/
> but hope that is seen is not hope/
> for what a man sees why does he yet hope for? /
>
> The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen is faith/
> And our Lord is a consuming fire/
>
> If we hope for what we see not/
> then do we with patience wait for it. /
>
> The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen is faith/

---

[10] Texture here is being used to refer to both timbre and shifts in texture such as a change from polyphony to homophony.

And our Lord is a consuming fire.[11]

For a formal chart of this movement, see figure 1 below:

Figure 1:[12]

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    A    (M.1-34)                      │
│ Instrumental introduction  (1-11)                     │
│ First Stanza  (12-26)                                 │
│    a  (12-20) - chorus (duet-style) and instr.        │
│    b  (21-23) - a cappella chorus                     │
│    c  (24-26) - tenor solo, sustained brass           │
│ Refrain  (27-34)                                      │
│    d  (27-30) - spoken chorus, instr.                 │
│    e  (31-34) - sung chorus, instr.                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    A'   (M.35-71)                     │
│ Instr. interlude (35-44) - retrograde of intro.       │
│ Second Stanza  (45-63)                                │
│    a'  (45-52) - chorus (duet-style) and instr.       │
│    b'  (53-59) - a cappella chorus                    │
│    c'  (60-63) - tenor & bass soli, sustained brass   │
│                  (inversion of "c")                   │
│ Refrain (64-71) - exact repetition of M.27-34         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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The first movement consists of an A section and an A' section of approximately equal

proportions. A consists of an introduction containing contrapuntal gestures from the strings and

woodwinds. After this the first stanza of text begins in measure 12 with a chorus. The chorus is

singing in offset counter point and is accompanied by the trumpet and trombones. Mm. 24-26

complete the stanza as the tenor sings the last line over an entirely stagnant instrumental part.

This solo is followed by what could be described as the refrain of this section. The chorus

proclaims in rhythmic speech that faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of

things not seen is faith."[13] This proclamation is followed by another: "And our Lord is a

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[11] Stravinsky Igor, *A Sermon, a Narrative and a Prayer: Cantata for Alto and Tenor Soli, Speaker, Chorus and Orchestra* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1961), 1-12

[12] JAY W. WILKEY, "Igor Stravinsky's Cantata: A Sermon, A Narrative, and A Prayer: A Conductor's Introduction," The *Choral Journal* 10, no. 2 (September-October 1969): 15, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23543122. Wilkey's analysis, which is meant for conductors, is largely concerned with structure on the large scale. His divisions of sections, found after my own analysis, were so similar to my own that Wilkey's formal charts were used in the paper rather than my own.

[13] Stravinsky mm. 27-30.

consuming fire,"[14] which concludes the A section. The A' section begins with an interlude which is a somewhat shorter version of the introduction in retrograde. After the interlude we hear the second stanza, which has the same textural patterns in A' as in A, but this time the chorus is accompanied by the strings and the tenor solo is a bass/tenor soli. Finally, the movement ends with the refrain, restated exactly as it was before.

The second movement's form is also related the text, which is divided into three parts based on these divisions of the story: Stephen's ministry, his trial, and his death. There is a lot of text in this movement, and much of it is narrated rather than sung. For most of the movement, the instrumentation varies depending on whether there is a male voice or a female voice sounding. This further differentiates the sections and continues of the role of timbre as a structural device. As suspected in the open listening, the introduction and interludes are much shorter in this movement than the first movement. Structurally, this may occur because the interludes in this movement seem to serve a dramatic function while the introduction and interlude in the first movement serve the formal purpose of establishing sections. The overall structure is through-composed; for a formal chart of the movement, see figure 2 below:

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[14] Ibid mm. 31-34.

Figure 2:[15]


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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      I - The Ministry of Stephen   (M.72-112)           │
│              (Acts 6:2, 4-5a, 7-8)                      │
│  A    a  (72-78a) - instr. intro.                       │
│       b  (78b-89) - speaker and alto (general call to   │
│                       ministry)                          │
│  A'   a' (90-97)  - instr. interlude                    │
│       b' (98-101) - speaker & alto (calling of Stephen);│
│                       condensation of "b" material       │
│  B    c  (102-105) - speaker (spreading Word); can-     │
│                       onic style: missionary activity    │
│       d  (106-112) - alto (Work of Stephen)             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      II - The Trial of Stephen   (M.113-186)            │
│           (Acts 6:9a, 10-12, 15; 7:1, 51b-52a)          │
│  C    e  (113-129) - speaker; instr. reflect "disputing"│
│                       and "stirring up the people"       │
│       b" (130-137) - alto (Stephen's countenance)       │
│       f  (138-141) - speaker (questioning in trial)     │
│  D    g  (142-162) - tenor (Stephen's sermon)           │
│       h  (163-167) - speaker (the reaction); instr. por-│
│                       tray ideas of "cut to heart" and   │
│                       "gnashing teeth"                   │
│  D'   g' (168-178) - tenor (Stephen's vision); inversion│
│                       of "g" material                    │
│       h' (179-186) - tenor and alto (stoning); hocket   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      III - The Death of Stephen   (M.187-215)           │
│              (Acts 7: 54-57a, 58-60)                    │
│  A"   b"'(187-193a) - speaker & alto (Saul's consenting)│
│  E    i  (193b-198) - speaker & tenor (First Word)      │
│       j  (199-205a) - speaker, alto & tenor (2nd Word)  │
│       k  (205b-207) - speaker & tenor (3rd Word)        │
│  A"'  a" (208-215) - instr. coda; harmonically similar to│
│                       intro.                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

The third movement is fairly straightforward in its structure. Once again, we see texture as one of the delineators of form. In this movement the texture mostly consists of the singers, while the instrumentation remains sparse until the very end of the music. This form also continues the trend of the text helping to show the form, as each of the large parts show a different aspect of the prayer the movement is based on. This can be seen in the text below:

Movement 3:
[A] Oh My God, if it Bee Thy Pleasure to cut me off before night/
[A'] Yet make me, My Gracious Sheepherd [*sic*], for one of Thy Lambs to whom Thou Wilt Say, 'Come You Blessed' and cloth me in a white robe of righteousness./
[B] that I may be one of those singers who shall cry to Thee Alleluia.

[15] Wilkey 16

One interesting feature of this movement is its gentleness, which will be discussed at further length when listening for semantic and ontological meaning. For a summary of movement three see figure 3 below:

Figure 3:[16]

```
                    A    (M.216-239)

Soli   (216-231) - alto solo (216-226)
                   imitative  duet  (227-230)

Tutti (231-239) - tenors  and  basses  with  soli
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                   A'   (M.240-258)

Soli   (240-243) - duet,  corresponding  to  M.227-230

Tutti (244-258) - SATB  with  soli
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                    B    (M.259-275)

Soli   (259-261) - introduce  "alleluia"

Tutti (262-275) - SATB  with  soli
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Reflection 4 (semantic and ontological)

What follows is a reflection on a combined three listenings attempting to find semantic and ontological meaning. There are multiple levels of meaning within *A Sermon, A Narrative and A Prayer.* The first, most obvious one is the surface level of the text itself. The first movement speaks of faith and hope, and it seems reasonable to assume that that the music is expressing those ideas in some way. The second movement is a straightforward story, and the third is a prayer about being ready to die in the Lord's time. The next level of meaning is how, if at all, these texts fit together to make a whole. How are they connected? From previous listenings, the dramatic peak of the piece is clearly the death of Stephen. If that is so, then perhaps the text leads us to that point, and also brings us back down. Indeed this is exactly what the text does: faith and hope is exactly what Stephen was proclaiming and providing to the

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[16] Ibid., 16

people in the second movement. They are also what he was full of: "And Stephen, full of

faith."[17] This leads us into the second movement, which leads us to the dramatic peak through

the natural drama of the story. Finally, the third movement provides us with the peace given to a

Martyr (in this case Stephen) as they are about to perish, giving the listener closure.

If these textural levels of meaning are true, then the meaning in the music should work

along the same lines. The music affirms the importance of the word "faith" through the use of

spoken unison in the chorus[18] with very little activity in the accompaniment to distract from the

text.

Figure 4:[19]
mm. 64 – 67

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[17] Stravinsky m. 107.

[18] In the recording used by the author, there seemed to be some harmony in the un-pitched section despite the fact that only tenors have regular note-heads.

[19] Stravinsky Igor, *A Sermon, a Narrative and a Prayer: Cantata for Alto and Tenor Soli, Speaker, Chorus and Orchestra* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1961).

In the second movement, the importance and drama of Stephen's death is confirmed by the loud brass chord punctuating his death, followed immediately by a much quieter section. Also shown in the music of this movement is a connection through similar opening gestures in both movement one and movement two.

Figure 5:[20]

m.1   m. 72

This expresses the meaning that faith, the main topic of the first movement, is a strong presence at the beginning of the second movement. Finally, the third movement's gentle instrumental part and relatively steady meter expresses Stephen's peace just before and after his death.

The ontological meaning seems to be drawn from the overall narrative of faith allowing one to stand up for his faith, said faith leading to death, and said death leading to peace and life. One could dig into this narrative and attempt to find some sort of Freudian meaning in this piece, or try to find some way to secularize it, but perhaps in this case, per Ockham's razor, the best interpretation is the obvious one. Thus the ontological meaning in this one case is fairly close to the surface of the text: For a believer in Christ, Faith is tantamount, and believers may need to

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[20] Ibid., 1, 13

stand up for that belief no matter what the consequences, and if they do this, they will have peace.

Reflection 5 (open)

The final listening is another open listening. During this listening I could sense the arc of the drama throughout, and a sense of where I was in the piece was consistent. Some features are so characteristic of Stravinsky that to my ear they first seem to express the opposite of the meaning I now hear as described in the previous listenings. Many more listenings could be done, but I feel that I have a solid grasp of the piece.

Analysis of Josquin Des Prez' *Ave Maria ... Virgo Serena*

Reflection 1 (open)

The first listening reveals how difficult it will be to interpret this piece. The mood is difficult to sense because initially feels fairly steady throughout, without a strong dramatic arc. What is clear from the first listening is a delineation of sections through changes in vocal texture. There are clear shifts between strict imitation, counterpoint and homophonic textures. The clearest breaks may line up with stanzas of text, this will need to be explored later.

Reflection 2 (open)

A second and third listening begin to reveal more about the dramatic arc of the piece. The changes of texture create a sense of tension and release by themselves, and they seem to be combined with changes in vocal register. Moments where the voices are in a higher tessitura, generally combined with a higher dynamic level, provide a higher level of tension. These moments are generally followed, either immediately or soon after, by a section in a more comfortable tessitura. Also contributing to the dramatic motion of the piece is the addition and removal of voices. The piece begins with a sparse imitative texture and becomes fuller until very

close to the halfway point when the texture reduces to just two voices. This is likely an important moment and will need to be explored in the future listenings. The texture then becomes fuller once again, and the ending leaves us with a homogenized texture for a final declarative statement. More open listenings could be done, but at this point, to avoid getting stuck in a loop, I believe the time has come to move onto syntax.

Reflection 3 (syntax):

The fourth through sixth listenings concentrates on the textural structure of the piece. It seems that the vast majority of the structure is derived from the text, as such it seems reasonable to show the text and explore its structure before reflecting on these listenings:

Ave Maria, Gratia plena,
(Hail Mary, full of grace)
Dominus tecum, virgo serena.
(The Lord is with thee, serene Virgin)

I.
Ave cujus conceptio,
(Hail, whose conception)
Solemni plena gaudio,
(Full of great jubilation)
Coelestia, terrestrial,
(Fills heaven and earth)
Nova replet laetitia.
(with new joy)

II.
Ave cujus nativitas
(Hail, whose birth)
Nostra fuit solemnitas;
(brought us joy)
Ut Lucifer lux oriens,
(as Lucifer, the morning star)
Verum solem praeveniens.
(went before the true sun.)

III.
Ave pia humilitas,
(Hail, pious humility,)
Sino viro foecunditas;
(fruitful without a man,)
Cujus annunciation
(whose Annunciation)
Nostra fuit salvatio
(brought us salvation)

IV.
Ave vera virginitas,
(Hail, true virginity,)
Immaculata castitas,
(immaculate chastity,)
Cujus purificatio
(whose purification)
Nostra fuit purgation.
(brought our cleansing.)

V.
Ave praeclara omnibus
(Hail, glorious one)
Angelicis virtutibus,
(in all angelic virtues,)
Cujus juit assumpio
(whose Assumption)
Nostra glorificatio.
(was our glorification.)

O mater Dei,
(O Mother of God,)
Memento mei.
(remember me.)
Amen

There are seven strophes in the text, traditionally, this number is associated with Mary.

The five internal strophes are each related to a feast of the Virgin: The Conception, Nativity,

Annunciation, Purification, and Assumption. Each of the internal strophes begins with 'Ave'

and contains two lines with eight syllables each. II, III and IV share the same rhyme in the

opening lines and the closing lines of III IV and V share a rhyme as well. The span of each section is determined by the beginning and ending of each strophe.

The first section begins with exact imitation an octave apart or on the same pitch level, this continues through three phrases of the text. [21] The first time all four voices are heard at the same time, and without strict imitation is the fourth phrase. The rhythmic motion also speeds up in an Ockeghem like drive to the cadence. The overlapping of the voices prevents any sense of cadence until just before the first internal strophe when it cadences on C. The second section slips into homophony, allowing the music to move through the text much more quickly.[22] Although the voices do not imitate each other individually, the upper voices do sing a duet, which is then imitated by the lower voices, the first presentation of the line is in parallel sixths, and the second is in parallel 6/3 sonorities. This style is very similar to fauxbourdon, and could be important to note in later listenings.

The third section pairs the upper voices in an imitative duet.[23] The imitation is at the fifth and a half note apart. The lower voices then imitate that duet, still at the fifth, but only a quarter-note apart rather than a half-note. Similarly to the first section the voices come together in four parts in the latter part of this section for 3 measures before the cadence on C. In the fourth section, duets are the predominant texture throughout the strophe.[24] The first couplet presents a theme sung by the upper voices, followed by an imitation at the octave by the lower voices. The second couplet also has a duet in the upper voices followed by a duet between the lower voices, but this time the duet is not an imitation of anything else in the stanza. The fifth section shifts to a triple

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[21] Mm. 1-15: Ave Maria, Gratia plena
[22] Mm. 16-27: Ave cujus conceptio,
[23] Mm. 28-38: Ave cujus nativitas
[24] Mm. 39-47: Ave pia humilitas

meter, creating a strong contrast with the precious sections.[25] The voices move in a very close

canon between the tenor and the superious within the four voice texture. The sixth section,

which is also the final full strophe, returns to the familiar duple meter for several measures.[26]

However, the piece returns to triple meter in measure 67 and remains in triple meter until the

ending. The sixth section also returns to an imitative texture. Finally, the seventh section begins

with a dramatic pause. [27] The voices then homogenize into a chordal texture providing a clear

hearing of the text. The meaning of which will be explored in later listenings. The structure of

the piece is summarized in the table below.

Table 4.

Section 1: Mm. 1-15: Ave Maria, Gratia plena		
Exact imitation at the Octave. Mm. 1 – 13	Drive to Cadence. Mm. 14 – 15	
Section 2[28]: Mm. 16-27: Ave cujus conceptio[29]		
Upper voice duet. 16 - 18	Lower voice duet. 18 – 20	Homophony. Mm 20 – 27
Section 3: Mm. 28-38: Ave cujus nativitas		
Imitative duet in upper voices a fifth apart distanced by a half note. Mm. 27 – 30	Imitative duet in lower voices a fifth apart distanced by a quarter note. Mm. 30 – 33	Voices come together after layering voices. Mm. 33 – 38
Section 4: Mm. 39-47: Ave pia humilitas		
Duet in upper voices followed by duet in lower voices. Mm. 39 – 42	Second duet in upper voices followed by duet in lower voices. Mm. 42 – 47	
Section 5: Mm. 47-55: Ave vera virginitas		
Shift to triple meter and close canon in inner voices		
Section 6[30]: Mm. 56-72: Ave praeclara omnibus		
Return to duple meter. Imitative texture. Mm. 56 - 67	Triple Meter. 68 - 71	
Section 7: Mm. 72-79 O mater Dei		
Dramatic Pause. M. 72	Near rhythmic unison. Mm. 73 – 76	Return to duple, still rhythmic unison. Mm. 77 – 79

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[25] Mm. 47-55: Ave vera virginitas

[26] Mm. 56-72: Ave praeclara omnibus

[27] Mm. 72-79 O mater Dei
[28] Strophe 1
[29] Fauxbourdon sonorities.
[30] Final full strophe.

Reflection 4 (a combined description of listening for semantic and ontological meaning):

Semantic and ontological meaning is difficult to find or interpret in this piece. Semantic meaning was the most difficult to hear given the fairly consistent timbre and tone of the piece. However, several listenings seem to have revealed some ontological meaning. The meaning that was found seems to be a direct correlation between the music and the text. This relationship between the two elements of the piece reaffirms the semantic structure of the piece. As will be explored, choices of texture seem to be an important element in the expression of ontological meaning. The exact imitation in the first 15 measure of the piece might represent never-ending praise for Mary, the overlapping voices in exact imitation give the impression that the music never ends, that the heavenly host will never cease to praise her. The next stanza the 6/3 sonorities which are reminiscent of Du Fay's fauxbourdon technique. Because this style was quite old by the time that Josquin wrote this piece, he may have been using it to underscore the idea of "solemn jubilation" in the next line of the text by recalling an earlier time.[31] This is further underscored by the fact that, when we actually reach said line in measures 20 – 22, we hear homophonic texture in all four voices for the first time in the motet. The last couplet of the strophe features tight imitation with staggered rhythms as the voices climb upwards in a harmonic sequence. This dense texture, invigorated texture could be related to the new joy mentioned in the 6th line of the text filling the multitudes of heaven and earth as they praise the Virgin because of her conception. This is emphasized even further by an emphatic cadence in measure 27.

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[31] Line 4

The second strophe seems to be centered on the idea of anticipation. The text speaks of anticipating Christ.[32] The voices mirror this idea through the way they imitate each other first further away temporally, then closer, then joining together. The upper voices imitate each other a fifth apart vertically, and a half-note apart temporally. The lower voices imitate the duet in measure 30, also a fifth apart vertically, but syncopated a quarter-note apart instead of a half-note. In measures 35 through 38, all of the voices briefly join together in four part texture for the first time since measure 27. After the cadence, this texture fades away, and the third strophe[33] begins. The first couplet presents a theme sung by the upper voices, followed by an imitation at the octave by the lower voices. The second couplet also has a duet in the upper voices followed by a duet between the lower voices, but this time the duet is not an imitation of anything else in the stanza. This could be because the text in this strophe mentions humility of the Virgin. By avoiding the more decadent imitative textures, and remaining in a sparser texture, a feeling of simplicity is achieved, which could emphasize Virgin's "pious humility."[34] Regardless of the meaning of the third strophe, it strongly contrasts with the fourth strophe.

Ontological meaning is difficult to find in the fourth strophe. But some possible meaning could be found in the use of a close canon in between the superious and the tenor, which might represent the savior inside of the Virgin's womb. However, this meaning is not clear. In the final strophe, we return to the familiar duple meter as well as the imitative texture until the triple meter begins again in measure 56. This could be representative of Mary's assumption into heaven. The duple meter could represent earth, and the triple meter could represent heaven through the Trinity. After a dramatic pause, we come to the final section:

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[32] "the true sun" line 10.
[33] Ave, pia humilitas.
[34] Line 11

O mater Dei,
(O Mother of God,)
Memento mei.
(remember me.)
Amen[35]

The ensemble is in an almost entirely homogenous texture as this text is stated, as if all the

voices in the world stopped what they were doing so that they could ask the Virgin to remember

them. Throughout the piece, there is a theme of the upper voices being followed by the lower

voices. This could represent Mary on earth following the heavenly Father.

Reflection 6 (a final open listening)

The contrast between the first listening and this listening is staggering. Where at first it

seemed that the mood was consistent throughout, there is now a great deal of tension and release.

The sections are clearly delineated and have distinct moods. With moods now clearly felt, I

believe I have a fairly strong understanding of the structure of the piece.

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[35] Mm. 72 – 79

CONCLUSION

The four analyses reveal that Ferrara's phenomenological method seems to help the analyst obtain a fairly strong understanding of a musical work. Forms were clearly defined, which puts this approach in line with other analytical approaches. Music that once seemed random or unchanging was revealed to contain expression and meaning through the repeated listenings. However, some weaknesses were revealed. The flexibility of Ferrara's method allowed the text to dominate the analyses of three of the pieces. This is partly due to the choice of literature, but one wonders what would have changed had more text-free music been chosen. Therefore, a further exploration of this technique would necessarily include a selection of music which does not contain text. Further exploration should also include common practice music. Including these types of music will make it more likely that the analysis will include more traditional methods in search of syntactical meaning, which will afford an opportunity to see how well such methods fit into Ferrara's method. Including such works would also stretch the application of the semantic and ontological steps. It could also be useful for that exploration to be done with a piece about which much has been written, such as a Beethoven symphony, so that Ferrara's method can be compared with others methods.

All of that said, the most positive element of Ferrara's method is the open attitude with which it encourages the analyst to approach a piece of music. Rather than the analyst forcing a theory upon a piece of music, the music dictates which theory should be applied. This allows the analyst freedom to explore every aspect of the piece if they so desire, while also allowing them to narrow their exploration by focusing more on one element of Ferrara's technique than another. This flexibility is both the strongest and weakest point of Ferrara's method. By including other methods within his own, Ferrara avoids the pitfall of forcing a particular type of form or

structure onto the piece. Although this flexibility can be a powerful ally, allowing elements such

as form to be analyzed through the lens of pitch, text, texture/timbre, or a combination of any

elements, the analyst must be careful about focusing too much on one aspect of form and losing

their own flexibility. The author's own analyses above show this danger through the fact that in

several of the analyses, text was chosen as the organizing factor, and, one could argue, forced

upon the music much like any theory could be. The other thing that the author's analyses

showed is that despite Ferrara's insistence that the piece of music take precedent over the

method, his approach still results in several analyses that look strikingly similar, and seem to

have forced a template over the analysis, which could be interpreted as the method taking

precedent over the music. It would seem however, that the method still allowed for a strong

understanding of the pieces studied, and that the flexibility offered by Ferrara's technique could

be a strong ally for music analysts.

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