

Tonality as Drama

Closure and Interruption in Four Twentieth-Century American Operas

Edward D. Latham

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To Cara—for the inspiration, and the perspiration.

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Preface

I am a singer. My parents are both singers. I married a singer. My three children are all singers. Thus, although for a number of reasons I had to cut the sections explicitly devoted to performance implications from the four analytical chapters in this book, I approached the analyses with a singer's perspective in mind. It is my fond hope that they will eventually prove useful to those engaged in the ongoing production of opera—performers, conductors, and directors. Whether you are “in the business,” or you are a music theorist, musicologist, or simply an opera enthusiast—read on! This is an analytical monograph by a Schenkerian music theorist, but it was also written by one performer and enthusiast for another.

My love for “dramatic vocal music”¹ began in high school, as I imagine it does for many high school students, with musical theater—in my case, with the musicals of Bernstein, Schwartz, Sondheim, Kander and Ebb, and (in my weaker moments) even some Lloyd Webber.² Though I dabbled in opera while a student at Phillips Academy (even taking direction from a spiky-haired Peter Sellars for a production of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*), I arrived at Yale College as something of a *naïf* with regard to art music. Professor Janet Schmalfeldt, now at Tufts University, saw to it that I did not remain that way. It was through my study of cadential harmonic processes and nineteenth-century *lieder* with her that I developed an abiding interest in tonal drama and its relationship to the text in dramatic vocal works, and became a music theorist.³

The singer-theorist is an exceedingly rare breed in the music-theoretical community, where the piano, for both practical and historical reasons, reigns supreme: Professors Elizabeth West Marvin of the Eastman School of Music, Cynthia Gonzales of the Texas State University, and Matthew Shaftel of the Florida State University are among the few other singer-theorists active at the national level. Perhaps this is due to a perceived “knowledge gap” between singers and theorists, who are stereotypically placed at opposite ends of the intellectual spectrum in descriptions of the music conservatory environment. Although most singers begin the formal study of their craft later than instrumentalists, it would be a mistake to assume that they do not have equally valuable insights to offer with regard to music theory and analysis. They are often highly attuned to aspects of melodic structure, register, and timbre, and they deal with text/music relationships on a daily basis. Moreover, a significant portion of the core tonal repertoire is comprised of operatic works—including the operas of Händel, Mozart, Rossini, and Verdi, to name just a few—and such leading Romantic composers as Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms lamented their inability (usually blamed on a poor librettist) to produce a successful work in one of the most important genres of their time.⁴ It is the singer who is uniquely qualified to bring an insider’s perspective to these important works.

To the singers who are interested in this book: unless you are preparing one of the roles discussed in Chapters 4 through 7, you are probably most familiar with the music of *Porgy and Bess*. Read the sections on “Scoring a Role” and “Applying the System to the Analysis of Opera” in Chapter 2 to get a sense of Stanislavsky’s system of dramatic objectives, and then skip to Chapter 5. You may want to read through Table 1 first, to evaluate my interpretation of Porgy’s objectives, then read through the analyses of his individual numbers—compare Figure 5 (“I Got Plenty O’ Nuttin’”) to Figure 13 (“Bess, Oh Where’s My Bess?”) to see how closure and lack of closure are displayed differently in the graphs (beamed open-note descent vs. beamed open-note repetition). Try to sing these two popular song/arias

to yourself while following the abstracted scores in the figures, and consider whether the closure or lack of closure shown in the graphs would impact the way you or your peers would perform these two songs.

To the broader theatrical community: the ongoing publication of new English translations of the complete works of Stanislavsky by Routledge Press is a testament to the enduring influence of his ideas on the current generation of actors, directors, and theatre educators. Overlooked amidst this flurry of activity is the fact that Stanislavsky ended his career as an opera director and devoted considerable time and energy to the genre throughout his lifetime. He saw opera as a new and greater challenge for the director, and despite his efforts, in many ways it remains so today; see the section on “Applying the System to the Analysis of Opera” in Chapter 2. Translations from the Russian of any production notes held in the Stanislavsky Archive for the operas directed by Stanislavsky (listed in Chapter 2, Figure 8) would be a valuable resource for further research into the dramatic analysis of opera.

To the Schenkerians who are interested in this book: aside from the occasional graphical oddities arising from the jazzy harmonic vocabulary of Gershwin and Weill (e.g., the multiple implied tones and substitutions in the background of Figure 11, “I Loves You Porgy”), the two primary innovations in the book are the permanent interruption and the multi-movement *Ursatz*. Both structures are discussed at length in the Introduction, and then incorporated into the subsequent analytical chapters. I have found similar structures in the nineteenth-century song cycles of Schubert and Schumann, as well as the operas of Verdi, Massenet and Puccini—the topics of my current research. What pieces do you know that end with an interrupted or broken line, or that might contain background structures spanning multiple movements, given their tonal plans?

There are several additional items of theoretical interest in the graphs: in Chapter 5, the chromatic *Aussensatz* in Figure 5 (“I Got Plenty O’ Nuttin”), the augmented initial arpeggiation in Figure 9 (“Bess, You Is My Woman Now”), and the “gapped” 5-line in Figure 15 (“Oh Lawd, I’m On My

Way”); in Chapter 6, the interrupted 8-line in Figure 2 (“Lonely House”), and the imperfect authentic “interruption” at $\hat{3}$ in Figure 8 (“We’ll Go Away Together”); in Chapter 7, the deceptive cadence from V^{11}_7 to IV harmonizing $\hat{1}$ in Figure 1c (“Once I Thought”).

To the broader music-theoretical community: while the four operas studied here are certainly not representative of early twentieth-century opera in general, they do speak to a broader trend in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century “transitional” music toward what I call the “strategic use of tonality.” Ignoring for a moment the specter of intentionality raised by this turn of phrase, reconsider your favorite pieces from this period. Given that post-Wagnerian composers were no longer bound by the common-practice rules of harmonic progression and cadential resolution, don’t those occasional authentic cadences, all the more prominent for their isolation and strangeness, take on more semantic significance? I have found numerous moments that are semantically significant in this way in the works of Debussy, Scriabin, Janáček, and Britten, among others. For other instances of unusual harmonies and modulation schemes that make great teaching examples, see the following figures: in Chapter 4, the $\flat VI—V—\flat III—IV$ modulation scheme in Figure 2c (“The Bag of Luck”); in Chapter 5, the use of i^{add6} in Figure 1 (“They Pass By Singin’”), the use of $\sharp IV$ in Figures 4 and 5, and the $I—III^{\sharp}—\flat VI$ ($\sharp V$) modulation scheme in Figure 9 (“Bess, You Is My Woman Now”).

ENDNOTES

- ¹ I define “dramatic vocal music,” as any vocal genre or individual piece that is built around one or more characters who attempt to overcome obstacles to achieve a specific objective, including most operas, operettas, musicals, and oratorios, as well as some cantatas, art songs, and song cycles. Other vocal genres include “narrative” and “poetic” vocal music.
- ² Composer Maury Yeston, however, currently ranks first on my list, as the only Yale-educated music theorist that I know of that makes a living writing Broadway musicals. For his theoretical work, see Maury Yeston, *The Stratification of Musical Rhythm* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), and Maury Yeston, ed., *Readings in Schenker Analysis and Other Approaches* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
- ³ See Janet Schmalfeldt, “Cadential Processes: The Evaded Cadence and the ‘One More Time’ Technique,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 12/1-2 (1992): 1–52, and “Towards a Reconciliation of Schenkerian Concepts with Traditional and Recent Theories of Form,” *Music Analysis* 10/3 (1991): 233–87.
- ⁴ Several important twentieth-century composers, including Debussy (*Pelléas et Mélisande*) and Schoenberg (*Moses und Aron*), in addition to the composers studied in this book, considered their lone operas to be their greatest masterpieces.

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General thanks are due to the dozens of people who have read my work and encouraged me along this arduous journey. Special thanks first to my family—my wife Cara, my children Elizabeth, Marie, and John, and my parents for believing in me. Thanks also to my teachers, especially Peter Warsaw, Janet Schmalfeldt, Patrick McCreless and Allen Forte. Thanks to God, who needs no thanks from me.

Tonality as Drama: An Introduction

Is tonality, as defined by harmonic and linear progression, inherently dramatic? It should be clear from its title where the present book and its author stand on that issue. Though Austrian music theorist Heinrich Schenker's declaration that "in music the drama of the fundamental structure [das Drama des Ursatzes] is the main event"¹ was later cited by would-be detractors as an example of his narrow-minded focus on "the music itself," it is actually an explicit acknowledgment of Schenkerian theory as a theory of musical drama, an idea that will be further explored in Chapter 3. Carl Schachter notes that "elements of the fundamental structure ... become charged with dramatic tension through their suppression or their transformation"² and analytical work by other scholars has developed this theme.³ In fact, the unfolding of tonal musical structure—with all its detours, roadblocks, dead ends, and arrivals—is a roadmap for an inherently dramatic journey. This idea, implicit in some of the best writing on music (e.g., Edward T. Cone's article on Schubert's "promissory note"),⁴ is one of the most valuable and invigorating insights of musical scholarship, and a vital aspect of Schenkerian theory. Despite its significance, the relationship between musical and dramatic structure, particularly in vocal music, has not yet been formalized in an explicitly interdisciplinary analytical methodology.

Perhaps, part of the problem is a lack of precedent. Though Schenker was an opera critic in the early stages of his professional life,⁵ as an analyst he broke his customary silence on the subject of opera only to comment

negatively on Wagner's music. Schenker, as Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker point out, "did not otherwise venture into the brackish waters of opera, not even as far as the illusory purity of the Mozartean set-piece."⁶ However, since Schenker's death in 1935, music theorists—particularly in the United States—have adapted his ideas for application to a wider repertoire. As will be indicated in Chapter 2, this "Americanization" of Schenker (to use William Rothstein's term) bears some resemblance to the dissemination of Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky's ideas on acting, in that "disciples" of varying degrees of orthodoxy—including the present author—have appropriated Schenker's system for their own purposes and to serve their own agendas.⁷ If combined with an equally nuanced and flexible mode of dramatic analysis, this expanded form of Schenkerian analysis might provide a model for the analysis of opera and other forms of "dramatic vocal music."⁸

Merging Tonal and Dramatic Analysis

What would be the methodological requirements for this new "linear-dramatic" hybrid?⁹ When Abbate and Parker, in the preface to *Analyzing Opera*, boldly declared that "'analyzing opera' should mean not only 'analyzing music' but simultaneously engaging with equal sophistication, the poetry and the drama,"¹⁰ they set a very high standard. Like the conundrum regarding the relative importance of text versus music in opera composition, captured by the famous seventeenth-century "words as the mistress of music" debate between the brothers Monteverdi and the critic Artusi, opera analysis has historically tended to migrate from one pole (music) to the other (poetry) and back again, while drama remained in a no man's land between the two, an uncharted territory that must be crossed in order to reach the true destination. A formalist enterprise at the outset, music analysis has been adapted, only with difficulty, to the demands of the operatic genre.

The results of this adaptation have largely tended to reinforce the notion of polarization.

One of the earliest examples of opera analysis, the fundamental-bass analysis by Jean d'Alembert of "*Enfin, il est en ma puissance*," from Lully's *Armide*, places opera analysis firmly in the formalist camp, presenting a harmonic analysis devoid of any commentary on the accompanying text.¹¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, composer-critics such as Berlioz, Schumann, and Carl Maria von Weber, all of whom, like Wagner after them, had a vested interest in maintaining the air of mystery surrounding the act of musical composition, had steered opera analysis away from the music and toward the poetry.¹² In 1912, music criticism had devolved to such a state that Schoenberg could complain that the critics "prattle almost exclusively about the libretto, the theatrical effectiveness, and the performers."¹³ Schoenberg does not exempt composer-critics. He asserts:

This is even true in the case of a composer's writing criticisms. Even if he is a good composer. [*sic*] For in the moment when he writes criticisms he is not a composer, not *musically inspired*. If he were inspired he would not describe how the piece ought to be composed, but would compose it himself.¹⁴

Later in the twentieth century, several explorers made the trek back towards analysis focused on the music itself. Led by Edward J. Dent, in whose capable hands music criticism began to take on a more analytical aspect once again, opera analysts began to return their focus to the music.¹⁵ Foremost among the resurgent formalists was Alfred O. Lorenz, whose studies of Wagnerian leitmotif were responsible for the creation of an entire cottage industry.¹⁶ Armed with their newfound focus on the music and, specifically, the motive, opera analysts tackled works by Mozart, Verdi, and Berg, as well as Wagner.¹⁷

In the 1990s, the pendulum began to swing back toward the text, as opera analysis was swept up in a broader cross-disciplinary examination of the

meaning of musical structure.¹⁸ As a result, a more balanced approach—one that includes the examination of text and music in equal proportions—is apparent in several recent opera studies.¹⁹ Amid all the attention paid to the music and the poetry, either individually or collectively, drama *per se* has nonetheless received short shrift, often relegated to a brief plot summary or outline.²⁰ While the method presented in Chapter 2—Stanislavsky’s system of character objectives—is not intended to provide a comprehensive response to Abbate and Parker’s challenge, it attempts to provide a more sophisticated and detailed means of analyzing what characters *want*, as opposed to what they say or sing. By seeking a method of dramatic analysis that focuses on the successes and failures of individual characters *vis à vis* their spoken and unspoken desires, the opera analyst can move beyond surface issues of plot to examine character motivations at a deeper level.

The Permanent Interruption and the Multi-Movement *Ursatz*

Linear-dramatic analysis—if it is committed to examining the dramatic goals or objectives of individual characters, both those that are successfully achieved and those that are undermined—must also define tonal success and failure in order to facilitate a comparison of the two. In Schenkerian analysis, ultimate tonal success in a given piece is defined by the completion of its *Ursatz*, or fundamental structure, comprised of the *Urfinie* (fundamental line) and the *Bassbrechung* (bass arpeggiation). An *Ursatz* is considered complete upon linear and harmonic arrival at its tonic pitch and triad, respectively, usually in a piece’s final measures. This arrival at tonic is an example of musical closure in the broadest possible terms, often prefigured by the many smaller linear completions and cadences during the course of the piece.

Given Schenker’s perceived emphasis on the fundamental structure in his analytical system (an emphasis that has drawn occasional criticism due to its

drastic graphical simplification of the musical surface)²¹ any compositional strategy that he allowed to impede the progress of the *Ursatz* ought to receive pride of place in a theory of tonal drama. That strategy—the most dramatic of all Schenkerian concepts—is the interruption. Typically a breaking of the line at $\hat{2}$ over the dominant followed by a return of the primary tone and a completed descent to $\hat{1}$ over the tonic, the interruption is typically discussed in relation to sonata form. Recent articles on form in music of the common-practice period include representative discussions of this concept.²² Its role as a marker of formal or phrase-structural division notwithstanding, the interruption is by its very nature a dramatic event—even its symbol (two vertical lines breaking the horizontal beam of the background line: $-||$) is visually striking.

Schenker's discussion of the interruption is primarily confined to two sections of *Der freie Satz*, the latter of which is devoted to sonata form. The first section occurs in the context of his presentation of structural aspects of the first middleground.²³ After demonstrating an interrupted 3-line, Schenker notes that “the initial succession $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ gives the impression that it is the first attempt at the complete fundamental line,” but that “ $\hat{2}/V$ appears as the limit of an initial forward motion of the fundamental line.”²⁴ As Peter Smith has noted, this statement contradicts Schenker's later assertion that the interruption “has the effect of a delay, or retardation, on the way to the ultimate goal.”²⁵ The apparent contradiction concerns the relative importance of the first half of the interruption. According to the first statement, the initial descent from $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ is subordinate to the completed version that follows it, while the latter statement gives the interruption more weight, de-emphasizing the subsequent retracing of the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ as a mere “delay.” In an editorial note on the two contrasting descriptions, Ernst Oster points out that although Schenker used two different notations for the interruption, both were intended to show the same thing: the relative importance of the first half of the interruption or what Allen Cadwallader and David Gagné call the “first branch.”²⁶

Schenker's emphasis on this "first branch" of the interruption makes phenomenological sense. He makes his emphasis explicit by stating that "with respect to the unity of the fundamental structure, the first occurrence of $\hat{2}/V$ is more significant than the second."²⁷ Because it receives priority of place in a musical work, the initial interrupted descent is of primary importance. In fact, it is possible to argue that the term "interruption" properly belongs only to the initial "broken" descent: the reinstatement of the primary tone and closure to $\hat{1}/I$, as noted by Smith, are more correctly identified as the "completion" or "continuation" of the fundamental line. As Cadwallader and Gagné put it, the actual "'point' of interruption" occurs at the end of the first branch.²⁸

Given the teleological significance of the point of interruption, should the analyst not then admit the possibility of a "permanent" or "sustained" interruption, one in which the second "branch," the completion or continuation, is omitted? Schenker implicitly dismissed the possibility of such a broken structure in *Der freie Satz*, maintaining that "if recent musical products have almost no end or seem to find no end, it is because they do not derive from a fundamental structure and hence do not arrive at a genuine $\hat{1}$; without the $\hat{1}$ a work is bound to give the effect of incompleteness."²⁹ But what if "the effect of incompleteness," particularly as it pertains to a fundamental structure, is precisely the effect a composer seeks to create?

Two articles, in particular, have addressed this issue in various ways: David Loeb's essay on "dual-key movements" in *Schenker Studies*, and Schachter's article on "*Das Drama des Ursatzes*" in *Schenker Studies 2*.³⁰ While Loeb's essay includes some trenchant observations, most notably that "when pieces begin and end in different keys such that neither key is understood as subsidiary to the other, then we must abandon our usual approach and seek a different kind of overall structure,"³¹ his focus is primarily on Baroque instrumental forms. Schachter, for his part, notes that in the absence of a normative background structure, "what the analyst must do is to arrive at the intuition of some higher level—middleground or background—and to

test that intuition against the totality of impressions made by the piece.”³² He then goes on to graph Chopin’s *Mazurka in A \flat major*, Op. 41/3 as a 5-line in which “the ghostly presence of the missing $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{1}$ is so clearly evident that the analysis should suggest something like the following: $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$ —but where are $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{1}$?”³³ His graph uses question marks and parentheses to indicate the absent, implied structural pitches.

Schachter maintains that “often, as here, Schenkerian theory is able to accommodate structural anomalies without the need for extending it by postulating, for example, new *Ursatz*-forms”; the mazurka would count as “a transformed 5-line piece, and not one that simply traverses a third from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$.”³⁴ When the “totality of impressions” made by a piece includes a narrative in which a protagonist fails to reach a desired goal, however, it is tempting to disagree with Schachter. A *permanent interruption*—a broken background line descending only as far as $\hat{5}$ (for an 8-line) or $\hat{2}$ (for a 5-line or a 3-line)—is an effective, and indeed compelling, compositional response to such a scenario.³⁵ Schenker pupil Adele Katz puts it best when she claims that Wagner’s music, and by extension dramatic vocal music in general, must be studied

from two different points of view: first, whether it demonstrates the principles of structural unity; second, whether any sacrifice of these principles is due to the demands of the text.... [One must] consider any deviations in the basic techniques in relation to the text or dramatic action they represent.³⁶

Even with the permanent interruption representing musical failure, linear-dramatic analysis requires a second theoretical concession in order to compare the changing objectives of a character across an entire role to that character’s music—namely, the *multi-movement Ursatz*, a “meta-fundamental structure” in which each of the notes of the fundamental line is the primary tone of a separate aria, number, or movement, supported by the tonic of that number. Traditionally, Schenkerian analysts have restricted their analytical endeavors

to the tonal structure within a single piece or movement. David Neumeier and Patrick McCreless, however, have argued for a widening of analytical scope to include multi-movement works. McCreless, as part of a bid to reconcile Schenkerian analysis with Leo Treitler's work on key associations, claims that "linear analysis ... is by no means incompatible with a point of view that finds tonal meaning echoing from moment to moment in a single movement, or from movement to movement in a multipartite work."³⁷ In his writing, Neumeier lays the groundwork for the future development of a model for multi-movement works, which is worth quoting in its entirety. He writes:

when the closed analytic system—in our case, Schenker's method applied to single movements—is confronted with a situation outside its capacities—here, the problem of multi-movement forms—the way to proceed is to add other pertinent structural criteria and develop an expanded, but again closed, methodology. Thus, for the song cycle and other expanded vocal works (including opera?), we need to add to Schenker's harmonic-tonal and voice-leading model, as expressed in the *Ursatz*, the narrative or dramatic criteria, and from this develop a broader analytic system which can treat these two as co-equal structural determinants.³⁸

Strategic Tonality in Four Post-Wagnerian Operas

Permanent interruption and the multi-movement *Ursatz* will form the theoretical basis for much of the discussion in Chapters 4 through 7, and early twentieth-century American opera serves as the analytical focus of the book for two reasons. First, as a sub-genre, early twentieth-century American opera provides perhaps the best collective example of *strategic tonality*, the use of linear and harmonic tonal processes to bolster or undercut moments of dramatic success or failure.³⁹ Second, although the operas of Joplin,

Gershwin, Weill, and Copland vary greatly in style and conception, they each contain characters who fail to attain their *superobjectives*—their goals for the entire opera—which in turn suggests the possibility of permanent interruption.⁴⁰ Naturally, this particularly dramatic situation is prevalent in operatic tragedies—especially, it seems, in love stories. Among the main *dramatis personae* of the operas studied in the analytical chapters, only *Treemonisha* and *Sporting Life* (the career-minded characters) achieve dramatic success, proving Lysander’s assertion in the opening scene of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* that “the course of true love never did run smooth.”

The rubric “twentieth-century opera” typically evokes the dark, post-Expressionistic sound worlds of Strauss and Berg, the angular and sharp-edged twelve-tone masterpieces of Schoenberg and Dallapiccola or the eclectic, psychologically driven styles of Janáček and Britten. Yet for a handful of composers in the United States, it came to signify something quite different. Determined to develop a uniquely American operatic style and laboring to various degrees under the strong influence of the European grand opera tradition, composers from Joplin to Sondheim opted to continue the development of a strategic approach to tonality begun by late Romantic composers such as Verdi, Massenet, and Puccini, among others.⁴¹ Their incorporation of elements from the folk, popular and jazz idioms necessitated a compositional approach that included a substantive role for tonality, broadened to include extended chords (ninths, elevenths and thirteenthths) and non-dominant cadential progressions, an approach made all the more striking by virtue of the fact that, following Wagner’s operatic “emancipation of the cadence” with his opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1859), tonality as defined by standard linear and harmonic progression was no longer considered to be a requirement for a successful composition.

Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha* (1911) was considered by some to be “the first truly American opera, not imitative of the European form.”⁴² Although the subject of its libretto—the plight of slaves working on plantations in

the South—is distinctively American and many of its melodies are inspired by African-American spirituals and folk songs, *Treemonisha* shares much in common with the European grand opera tradition in its strategic use of tonality. The “King of Ragtime” himself certainly thought of the work as grand opera, noting that

I am a composer of ragtime music but I want it thoroughly understood that my opera *Treemonisha* is not ragtime. In most of the strains I have used syncopations (rhythm) peculiar to my race, but the music is not ragtime and the score complete is grand opera.⁴³

The most significant difference between *Treemonisha* and the other operas considered in this volume is that it does not focus on the romantic relationship between a man and a woman. Instead it depicts two political adversaries, Treemonisha and Zodzetrick, vying for control of the plantation’s slave community. Because the two main characters are not dependent on one another to achieve their dramatic superobjective—quite the opposite, in fact—Joplin is free to have one succeed at the expense of the other, and this he does in a most convincing fashion. Treemonisha is the only character studied in Chapters 4 through 7 that completes a background descent to the tonic, though Joplin appends a coda in the final scene that moves the tonal center back to the key of the dominant in order to suggest the work that lies ahead for Treemonisha as the new leader of the community.⁴⁴ Zodzetrick’s music, by contrast, concludes without a return to his tonic key, though it does not comprise a permanent interruption like those analyzed in *Porgy and Bess*, *Street Scene*, and *The Tender Land*, since it does not end in the key of the dominant.

Schenkerian analyses frequently depict the coda as a passage of music that occurs after the descent of the fundamental line has reached its conclusion, acting as a prolongation of the final structural tonic in both the melody and the bass line. What makes Joplin’s tonal structure for Treemonisha’s role unusual is that the coda does not remain in the tonic key, reinforcing the

earlier structural arrival on the tonic. Rather, it modulates to the dominant, harmonically suggesting the possibility of a permanent interruption. In the absence of a narrative or dramatic context, the notion of a modulatory coda would be far less convincing, given the overwhelming amount of rhetorical emphasis that would have to be accorded to the structural cadence in order to overcome the phenomenological priority generally given to openings and conclusions. The motion to the dominant in the final two scenes of *Treemonisha*, however, can be considered peripheral to the main structure of the eponymous character's role only because, unlike the ill-fated couples in the other three operas, she successfully achieves her superobjective before the opera's conclusion. Thus, *Treemonisha* presents an example of an *open-ended coda*, a passage following closure at the background level that modulates away from the tonic key.

In contrast to *Treemonisha*, the dramatic event in George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935) that initiates the main character's quest to achieve his superobjective does not occur at the beginning of the opera. It is not until after Crown murders Robbins in the middle of Act 1, forcing Bess to abandon him for Porgy, that Porgy is able to begin building a happier life together with her. In order to convey the gradual crystallization of this new superobjective, Gershwin gives Porgy's first number ("They Pass By Singin'") an ambiguous tonal center, suggesting but ultimately withholding linear and harmonic closure in his home key (A minor). In Act 2, after Bess has come to stay with Porgy and has been living with him for a while, Gershwin reintroduces A minor with a strong primary tone and closes a local *Ursatz* in that key in "Buzzard Song," "Oh Little Stars" and "I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'," the previous two numbers set in E major and G major respectively, are incorporated as part of a large-scale *Anstieg* (initial ascent) that spans Porgy's first four numbers, leading to the initiation of his background primary tone and his quest to build a new life with Bess. Thus, the first half of Porgy's role in *Porgy and Bess* comprises a *multi-movement initial ascent*—a series of at least three separate numbers, the primary tones of

which form a stepwise ascent from the tonic to the primary tone of a multi-movement fundamental structure.

A second distinguishing feature of Gershwin's opera is the almost total absence of solo material for its leading female character. In contrast to Porgy, who has four solo numbers and solo sections in two more, Bess has only one solo ("What You Want Wid Bess?"), which becomes a duet with Crown. The other time she sings alone on stage (III/i), she borrows the first half of Clara's lullaby ("Summertime") to sing Jake and Clara's newly orphaned baby to sleep. She and Porgy do, however, share two important duets together ("Bess, You Is My Woman Now" and "I Loves You Porgy"), and it is primarily through these that she conveys her main objectives.

Kurt Weill immigrated to the United States in 1935, arriving in time to accept an invitation from Gershwin to attend the dress rehearsal for *Porgy and Bess*.⁴⁵ According to his wife, Lotte Lenya, "he listened very closely and he said 'you know, it is possible to write an opera for Broadway.'" From that point onward, Weill was "always consciously working towards an opera."⁴⁶ Though Gershwin called *Porgy and Bess* a "folk opera" and Weill referred to his *Street Scene* (1946) as an "American opera," they both premiered on Broadway and later made their way into the repertoires of either the Metropolitan Opera or the New York City Opera and thus can also be referred to as "Broadway operas."⁴⁷

Like Porgy and Bess, whose intertwined superobjectives are not firmly established until Act 2, Sam Kaplan and Rose Maurrant are not a couple at the beginning of *Street Scene*. Instead of using a multi-movement *Anstieg*, however, by setting each of their opening numbers in the same key (E \flat major) Weill creates an initial arpeggiation that tonally links the two characters but denies them a common primary tone: Sam's aria "Lonely House" contains an 8-line, while Rose's aria "What Good Would the Moon Be?" contains a 5-line. When the common primary tone (G) does arrive in their first duet, "A Sprig With Its Flower We Break," it is supported not by an E \flat major tonic but by C major, the major submediant. This large-scale harmonic substitution

emphasizes the fact that Sam and Rose have not yet decided to join together to achieve their respective superobjectives; that task is preserved for their next duet, “We’ll Go Away Together,” where E \flat is reintroduced as the tonic key and G is presented as a viable multi-movement primary tone. *Street Scene* therefore contains a **multi-movement initial arpeggiation**, a series of at least three separate numbers that prolong the tonic key, the primary tones of which form an arpeggiation concluding with the primary tone of a multi-movement fundamental structure.

Copland’s *The Tender Land* (1954) represents another aspect of the evolution of American opera. Although, like Gershwin, he labeled his work a “folk opera,” Copland interpreted the phrase differently, incorporating hymn tunes and other folk songs rather than elements of popular music, Broadway or jazz.⁴⁸ A second feature that separates Copland’s opera from the other three operas is its asymmetrical dramatic trajectory. Whereas *Porgy and Bess* and *Street Scene* take several scenes to establish the superobjectives of their respective characters and initiate a background primary tone, *The Tender Land* establishes both the background key and the primary tone in the opening scene, in Laurie’s aria “Once I thought I’d never grow.” Though all three operas contain permanent interruptions, the arrival at $\hat{2}$ over the dominant occurs much earlier in Copland’s opera: at the end of Act 2, rather than in the final scene of Act 3. Laurie’s grandfather calls a precipitous halt to Martin and Laurie’s budding romance and orders Martin off his farm. This pivotal moment that concludes Act 2 prompts Copland to create a **prolonged permanent interruption**—a series of two or more separate numbers concluding a multi-movement work, the primary tones of which prolong background arrival at $\hat{2}$ over the dominant.

All four examples of post-Wagnerian strategic tonality demonstrate remarkable sensitivity to the dramatic trajectories of their main characters. Perhaps because they were all forged in the fiery crucible of New York City, where they were judged (often harshly, especially by the *New York Times*) by the standards of both opera and musical theater, these four works display an

affinity for character and drama that is more a hallmark of musical theater than opera, even while they display all the musical characteristics of opera. In the next six chapters, a method for examining how they go about creating this affinity will be put forth and then applied to each one in turn.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition: Volume III of "New Musical Theories and Fantasies,"* 2 vols., ed. and trans. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), 137 n14.
- ² Carl Schachter, "Structure as Foreground: 'Das Drama des Ursatzes,'" in *Schenker Studies 2*, eds. Carl Schachter and Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 309. The title of the recent *Festschrift* for Schachter testifies to his belief in the meaning inherent in tonal structure. See L. Poundie Burstein and David Gagné, eds., *Structure and Meaning in Tonal Music: Festschrift in Honor of Carl Schachter* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2006).
- ³ See Rudy Marcozzi, "The Interaction of Large-Scale Harmonic and Dramatic Structure in the Verdi Operas Adapted from Shakespeare" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1992); Wayne Petty, "Imagining Drama as an Aid to Musical Performance" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the New England Conference of Music Theorists, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, April 1995); Arthur Maisel, "Voice Leading as Drama in *Wozzeck*," in *Schenker Studies 2*, ed. Schachter and Siegel, 160–91; and Walter Everett, "Singing About the Fundamental Line: Vocal Portrayals of Directed and Misdirected Motions" (paper read at the annual meeting for the Society of Music Theory, Phoenix, AZ, October 1997), and "Deep-Level Portrayals of Directed and Misdirected Motions in Nineteenth-Century Lyric Song," *Journal of Music Theory* 48/1 (2004): 25–68. For a related combination of Schenkerian theory and "energetics," see Frank Samarotto, "Sublimating Sharp ♯: An Exercise in Schenkerian Energetics," *Music Theory Online* 10/3 (2004), <http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.04.10.3/mto.04.10.3.samarotto.html>.
- ⁴ Edward T. Cone, "Schubert's Promissory Note: An Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 5/3 (1982): 233.
- ⁵ Giorgio Sanguinetti, "L'opera italiana nella critica musicale di Heinrich Schenker [Italian Opera in Heinrich Schenker's Music Criticism]," *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 29/3 (1995): 431–67.
- ⁶ Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, "On Analyzing Opera," in *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, ed. Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 4. For a recent and thorough list of Schenker's most important publications as well as secondary sources on Schenkerian theory, see David Carson Berry, *A Topical Guide to Schenkerian Literature: An Annotated Bibliography with Indices* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 2004). See also David Damschroder, *Music Theory From Zarlino to Schenker: A Bibliography and Guide* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1990), 304–17; Nicholas Rast, "A Checklist of Essays and Reviews by Heinrich Schenker," *Music Analysis* 7/2 (July 1988): 121–32; and Larry Laskowski, *Heinrich Schenker: An Annotated Index to His Analyses of Musical Works* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon, 1978).
- ⁷ See William Rothstein, "The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker," *In Theory Only* 9/1 (1986): 5–17. Reprinted in *Schenker Studies*, ed. Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 193–203.
- ⁸ See Preface, note 1.
- ⁹ The adjective "linear-dramatic" is taken from the title of the author's dissertation, and references Allen Forte's use of the term "linear-motivic" to describe post-Schenkerian analyses of linear structure. See Edward D. Latham, "Linear-Dramatic Analysis: An Analytical Approach to Twentieth-Century Opera" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2000), and Allen Forte,

- “New Approaches to Linear Analysis,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 41/2 (1988): 315–48.
- ¹⁰ Abbate and Parker, “On Analyzing Opera,” 4.
- ¹¹ Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, *Éléments de musique, suivant les principes de M. Rameau* (Lyon: Bruyset, Père et Fils, 1779), appendix.
- ¹² Two of the few exceptions where nineteenth-century opera critics did address the music directly may be found in Ian Bent, ed., *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See Hector Berlioz, “*Les Huguenots*: The Score,” 39–57, and Hans von Wolzogen, “Prelude, Act I [*Parsifal*],” 88–105.
- ¹³ Arnold Schoenberg, “The Relationship to the Text,” in Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, rev. ed., ed. Leo Stein and trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 143.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Edward J. Dent, *Mozart’s Operas: A Critical Study* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1913).
- ¹⁶ Alfred O. Lorenz, *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner*, 4 vols. (Berlin: M. Hesse, 1924–33).
- ¹⁷ See, for example, Siegmund Levarie, *Mozart’s “Le Nozze di Figaro”: A Critical Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952); Frits Noske, *The Signifier and the Signified: Studies in the Operas of Mozart and Verdi* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977); George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); and Janet Schmalfeldt, *Berg’s “Wozzeck”: Harmonic Language and Dramatic Design* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).
- ¹⁸ In his own writing, and as the editor of Indiana University Press’s *Musical Meaning and Interpretation* series, Robert Hatten has been particularly influential in effecting this broader disciplinary shift in music theory. See Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), and *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). In the *Musical Meaning* series, see especially Byron Almén and Edward R. Pearsall, eds., *Approaches to Meaning in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Peter H. Smith, *Expressive Forms in Brahms’s Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in His Werther Quartet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); and Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). For other recent studies of musical meaning, see Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Peter Hadreas, “Deconstruction and the Meaning of Music,” *Perspectives of New Music* 37/2 (1999): 5–28.
- ¹⁹ See Peter Kaminsky, “How to do Things with Words and Music: Towards an Analysis of Selected Ensembles in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*,” *Theory and Practice* 21 (1996): 55–78; Ted Conner, “Cherubino Rediscovered: Text, Music, and Narrative in Mozart’s Trio,” *Theory and Practice* 25 (2000): 27–64; and Janet Schmalfeldt, “In Search of Dido,” *The Journal of Musicology* 18/4 (2001): 584–615.
- ²⁰ The end of the millennium, viewed by many at the time as the *ne plus ultra* of dramatic events, must have inspired some notable exceptions. See Joachim Herz, “*Wozzeck*: Musikalische Struktur und Dramaturgie [*Wozzeck*: Musical Structure and Dramaturgy],” in *Alban Bergs Wozzeck und die Zwanziger Jahre*, ed. Jürgen Kühnel et. al. (Anif-Salzburg: Mueller-Speiser,

- 1999), 199–217; Carl S. Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle: Music and Drama in Béla Bartók's Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Giorgio Sanguinetti, “La funzione drammatica del campo tonale: Il duetto tra Carlo ed Elisabetta nel secondo atto del Don Carlo [The Dramatic Function of the Tonal Field: The Duet between Carlo and Elisabetta in the Second Act of *Don Carlo*],” in Giorgio Sanguinetti, *Intersezioni: Quattro studi di teoria e analisi musicale* (Cosenza: Università della Calabria, 1999), 109–36.
- ²¹ The misperception that Schenker privileged the fundamental structure at the expense of the musical surface is perpetuated largely by the current practice of teaching Schenkerian analysis in a large university seminar format, instead of in individual instructional sessions, as Schenker taught the system to his first students. The lack of individual instruction leads inevitably to a greater focus on the *Ursatz* as a consensus builder in classroom discussion. In actuality, as a performer and conductor, Schenker considered the musical surface (the foreground) of equal importance for its integral and aurally salient interrelationship with the background. On the importance of the foreground, see John Rothgeb, “Design as a Key to Structure in Tonal Music,” *Journal of Music Theory* 15/1–2 (1971): 230–53. For Schenker’s views on performance, see Heinrich Schenker, *The Art of Performance*, ed. Heribert Esser and trans. Irene Scott Schreier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and William Rothstein, “Analysis and the Act of Performance,” in *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, ed. John S. Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 217–40.
- ²² See David Smyth, “‘Balanced Interruption’ and the Formal Repeat,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 15/1 (1993): 76, and Peter H. Smith, “Brahms and Schenker: A Mutual Response to Sonata Form,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 16/1 (1994): 77. For a more recent discussion of the interruption, see Irna Priore, “The Case for a Continuous $\hat{5}$: Expanding the Schenkerian Interruption Concept—With Analytical Interpretations of Beethoven opp. 101, 109, and 111” (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2004), and “Further Considerations of the Continuous $\hat{5}$ with an Introduction and Explanation of Schenker’s Five Interruption Models,” *Indiana Theory Review* 25 (2004): 115–38.
- ²³ Schenker, *Free Composition*, 36–40. Carl Schachter, however, includes interruption as an element of background structure. See Schachter, “Structure as Foreground,” 299.
- ²⁴ Schenker, *Free Composition*, 36.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.
- ²⁶ Allen Cadwallader and David Gagné, *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 113.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.
- ²⁹ Schenker, *Free Composition*, 126 n6.
- ³⁰ See David Loeb, “Dual-Key Movements,” in *Schenker Studies*, ed. Siegel, and Schachter, “Structure as Foreground.”
- ³¹ Loeb, “Dual-Key Movements,” 76.
- ³² Schachter, “Structure as Foreground,” 302.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 304.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ The interruption at $\hat{3}$ is another less widely accepted but nonetheless intuitively attractive option for a permanent interruption, reflecting an imperfect authentic cadence at the piece’s conclusion.

- ³⁶ Adele T. Katz, *Challenge to Musical Tradition: A New Concept of Tonality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 195.
- ³⁷ Patrick McCreless, "Schenker and Chromatic Tonicization: A Reappraisal," in *Schenker Studies*, ed. Siegel, 144.
- ³⁸ David Neumeier, "Organic Structure and the Song Cycle: Another Look at Schumann's *Dichterliebe*," *Music Theory Spectrum* 4 (1982), 97.
- ³⁹ I have intentionally avoided the use of the word "intentionally" in the definition of strategic tonality. Whether Joplin and his peers were aware of the large-scale structural implications of the key schemes and melodic structures they created in their operas is an impossible question to answer, and largely irrelevant per the "intentional fallacy." The relationships between dramatic and musical structure are there to be considered, and possibly aurally perceived by those blessed with perfect pitch, excellent relative pitch, and/or the gift of "structural hearing" (Salzer, 1952). For two different perspectives on the "intentional fallacy," see Ethan Haimo, "Atonality, Analysis, and the Intentional Fallacy," *Music Theory Spectrum* 18/2 (1996): 167–99, and Edward D. Latham, "Review of Ethan Haimo's 'Atonality, Analysis and the Intentional Fallacy' *Music Theory Spectrum* 18/2 (Fall, 1996)," *Music Theory Online* 3.2 (1997), <http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.97.3.2/mto.97.3.2.latham.html>.
- ⁴⁰ Stanislavsky's concept of superobjectives is discussed at length in Chapter 2.
- ⁴¹ Britten and Janáček explored similar techniques in their early works, especially Peter Grimes and *Jenufa*, respectively. See Edward D. Latham, "Britten's Strategic Use of Tonality: A Review-Essay on Philip Rupprecht's Britten's Musical Language (2001)." *Theory and Practice* 28 (2003): 137–46, and Matthew M. Werley, "From Alienation to Abnegation: *Jenufa* and the Metaphysics of Dramatic and Musical Discourse at the Turn of Century" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Music Theory Society of the Mid-Atlantic, Baltimore, MD, April 4–5, 2003).
- ⁴² James Haskins, *Scott Joplin: The Man Who Made Ragtime* (New York: Scarborough, 1980), 177.
- ⁴³ Edward A. Berlin, *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 226.
- ⁴⁴ Sporting Life, a character in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, is also successful in achieving his superobjective and reaching tonal closure at the background level. See Edward D. Latham, "It Ain't Necessarily So: Sporting Life's Triumph in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*," *Indiana Theory Review* 25 (Fall 2005): 29–45.
- ⁴⁵ David Farneth, *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents* (Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 2000), 272.
- ⁴⁶ Lotte Lenya to Joseph Horowitz, October 26, 1979 interview in the *New York Times*. Quoted in Douglas Jarman, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Biography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 136.
- ⁴⁷ Later examples in this genre that also use strategic tonality include Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* (1957) and *Candide* (1976), and Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* (1979).
- ⁴⁸ Copland's librettist, the dancer Erik Johns, labeled *The Tender Land* an "operatic tone poem." See Erik Johns to Aaron Copland, not dated, Aaron Copland Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Cited in Christopher W. Patton, "Discovering 'The Tender Land': A New Look at Aaron Copland's Opera," *American Music* 20/3 (2002): 317–40.