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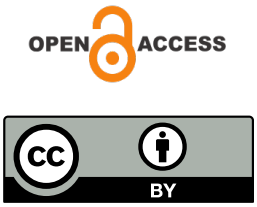

Bryan Hayslett

Implications for the Performance of the Music of Lee Hyla

ABSTRACT: Lee Hyla (1952–2014) belonged to a generation of composers whose formative musical experiences included playing in rock bands and listening to rock, punk, jazz, and other nonclassical genres. Hyla is among the most accomplished American composers of his generation, yet his work remains underexamined. His influences, particularly James Brown, Captain Beefheart, Neil Young, and Cecil Taylor, manifest in Hyla's music in a manner that transcends postmodern quotation or mere reference and affect his approach to rhythm, meter, and phrasing. These qualities provide unique interest for the listener and specific challenges for the performer. Through an analysis of *Dream of Innocent III* (1987) for amplified cello, piano, and percussion, I present my analytical framework inspired by Lerdahl and Jackendoff's generative theory of tonal music and Bruce Hayes's metrical stress theory. My analysis, rooted in rhythm and meter, shows performative implications of Hyla's influences as related to phrasing and structure.

Lee Hyla (1952–2014) gehörte zu einer Generation von Komponist*innen, die nachhaltig prägende Einflüsse durch das Spielen in Rock Bands und das Hören von Rock, Punk, Jazz und anderen nicht-klassischen Genres empfingen. Hyla zählt zu den versiertesten Komponisten seiner Generation, doch ist sein Werk kaum erforscht. Die Einflüsse auf seine Musik, u. a. von James Brown, Captain Beefheart, Neil Young und Cecil Taylor, manifestieren sich in seiner Musik in einer Weise, die postmoderne Zitat- oder Verweistechniken überwindet und seinen Zugang zu Rhythmus, Metrum und Phrasierung beeinflusst. Diese Qualitäten sind von einzigartigem Interesse für Hörer*innen und stellen besondere Herausforderungen an die Ausführenden. In der Analyse von *Dream of Innocent III* (1987) für verstärktes Cello, Klavier und Percussion stelle ich mein analytisches Rahmenkonzept vor, das von Lerdahls and Jackendoffs generativer Theorie tonaler Musik und von Bruce Hayes' Theorie metrischer Betonungen inspiriert ist. Meine Analyse basiert auf Rhythmus und Metrum und zeigt die Implikationen der Hyla beeinflussenden Musikformen auf die Performance von Phrasierung und Struktur.

Schlagworte/Keywords: generative theory of tonal music; Lee Hyla; meter; metrical stress theory; Metrum; Phrasierung; phrasing; rhythm; Rhythmus

Lee Hyla (1952–2014) was an American composer active in New York City, Boston, and Chicago. He was on faculty in the composition departments at New England Conservatory (NEC) (1992–2007) and Northwestern University (2007–2014). Despite his influential teaching career, Hyla and his music have remained largely unstudied, discussed in only a few publications. I learned of his music when I studied cello with one of Hyla's friends and interpreters, cellist Rhonda Rider. I was drawn to the visceral quality and grand gestures, which felt natural even

though I did not immediately understand how they worked. After familiarizing myself with many of Hyla's works and studying the materials in his archive, I learned that nonclassical artists influenced his aesthetic, notably James Brown, Captain Beefheart, Neil Young, and Cecil Taylor. In Hyla's music, their influence manifests itself in temporal structures based on gesture rather than perceptible meter, and the heard structure of events within gestures can be analyzed according to linguistic stress theory.

Nonclassical Influences

In the 1980's, Hyla was one of a small group of emerging composers in the northeastern region of the United States who were influenced by popular music. Hyla, Eric Moe (b. 1954), Mathew Rosenblum (b. 1954), Michael Gandolfi (b. 1956), Steven Mackey (b. 1956), and David Rakowski (b. 1958) were educated in the same schools and knew each other from living in the same cities. Several of them played guitar, piano, or saxophone in bands in high school and college, and rock and jazz were their entry points into music. The performance aesthetic of nonclassical styles impacted their use of timbre, harmony, and instruments. Most notably, their music shares rhythmic and metric characteristics influenced by popular artists.

These six composers were drawn to musical institutions within which they could explore their nonclassical musical interests, primarily NEC, Princeton University, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook. In the early 1970s, Paul Lansky joined the faculty at Princeton and provided an alternative musical approach to Babbitt's serialism. Newly headed by Gunther Schuller, NEC in Boston provided an alternative perspective to Harvard, and the school's stylistically open environment nurtured nonclassical influences alongside third stream music, jazz improvisation, and klezmer. These six composers were separated by one generation from the primary proponents of serialism in the United States in the mid-twentieth century: Milton Babbitt (1916–2011), Roger Sessions (1896–1985), and Earl Kim (1920–1998). Accepting the influence of popular styles was the result of their mentors' reaction against the confines of serialism, and Hyla's generation was encouraged to incorporate influences from popular music, a part of their musical upbringing. Hyla noted that he enjoyed working with Malcolm Peyton at NEC, who "let each [student] write in his own way […] at a time when 12-tone,

serial music was in style."[1] These composers were able to embrace their non-traditional musical influences as pedagogy was diversifying in the northeast. Yet they cannot be considered a stylistic school, and each is known for something different: Hyla for chamber music, Gandolfi for orchestral writing, and Rosenblum for microtonality. However, four decades provide the hindsight to understand how their endeavors reflected a certain attitude in American music in the 1970s and 80s, whose implications have yet to be explored.

The salience of meter and rhythm in the music of this group of composers suggests an approach to analysis that prioritizes phrasing and gesture. My analytical framework, geared toward performers, illuminates the structural and performative implications of this music by employing Fred Lerdahl's and Ray Jackendoff's generative theory of tonal music (GTTM)[2] and Bruce Hayes' metrical stress theory,[3] which both draw on theoretical frameworks borrowed from linguistics. GTTM was co-authored in 1983 by composer Lerdahl and linguist Jackendoff, who is also an accomplished clarinetist. The theory describes structures in tonal music according to psychology and perception through the use of Noam Chomsky's generative linguistic theory. Reinterpreting GTTM with another linguistic theory is a natural extension. My approach to analysis aims to aid in the performance of these works through a greater understanding of structure and phrasing from the perspective of rhythm and meter.

My framework addresses temporal tension, an approach particularly adequate for the music of Hyla. His nonclassical influences of Brown, Beefheart, Young, and Taylor include performance traditions that rely on non-notated alterations to rhythm made by performers. An example is "swinging," in which consecutive eighth notes are performed unevenly and the degree of unevenness depends on the context and the performer. Hyla's music specifically captures such temporal alterations and presents them as precise rhythms outside of an even meter. The music of Brown, Beefheart, Young, and Taylor contains small gestures, or contiguous units of music that have unique contour and momentum. The term "gesture" has many definitions, but I use the word here to refer to small groups of notes, heard in their music as "licks" or melodic fragments and as repeated ostinatos in the rhythm section. The shape of each gesture is understood according to the hierarchy of its constituents, and larger-level phrasing is perceived according

1 Church 1988, A-36.

2 Lerdahl/Jackendoff 1983.

3 Hayes 1995.

to the relationship of gestures. My analytical framework illuminates structure through the hierarchical organization of the music according to perceptual salience. All music contains gesture, but the concept is particularly important when analyzing and performing Hyla's music because of the prominence of gesture in the music of nonclassical musicians that influenced him. Structure is therefore more aptly defined according to gesture than in comparison to standard phrase forms. Analysis of Hyla's music benefits from a focus on perception rather than on score-based traditions of classical music. Although gestures in Hyla's influences rely on performance, his music should be performed precisely as written.

Structures in his music rely on the juxtaposition and relationship of gestures. To analyze rhythmic tension communicated through the relative emphasis of notes within each gesture, I examine a hierarchy of perceptual prominence. This emphasis is hierarchical, but different from the periodic beat hierarchy of tonal music. GTTM describes the tonal hierarchy, but the theory assumes a consistent time signature and beat length. Abandoning the assumption of periodic meter and the traditional beat hierarchy, temporal tension must be described in another way. Linguistic stress is hierarchical without a periodic framework. Thus, the concept can be employed when analyzing music without a constant, evenly spaced beat. Metrical stress theory suggests stress in language manifests as linguistic rhythm, and I combine the theory Hayes developed in 1995 with GTTM to create a new analytical framework that describes the relationship of rhythm and meter to structure and phrasing in the music of Hyla.

GTTM

GTTM was published when Hyla and the aforementioned composers were beginning to develop their professional careers. The theory's two pertinent components are *grouping structure*, or the perceptual segmentation of the musical surface into hierarchical groups, and *metrical structure*, or the hierarchy of strong and weak beats. GTTM's grouping structure translates to post-tonal music because the component is based on the psychological perception of rhythms irespective of any rules of tonality. Metrical structure does not describe post-tonal music and does not apply to Hyla's music. The theory employs *wellformedness rules* that constrain the possible analyses, and *preference rules* that suggest which possible analyses reflect the heard structure.

Grouping structure is hierarchical in nature. Groups of similar size are considered on the same level, and groups must be comprised of adjacent units with

each unit belonging to only one group at each level, except in the case of phrase elision. GTTM's grouping preference rules delineate group boundaries after long durations, where parallels between groups will result, and at changes in register, dynamics, or articulation. Metrical structure is also hierarchical in nature and is composed of beats; each level corresponds to a rhythmic duration. GTTM was intended to be applied to music with beats evenly spaced in time, so this concept does not apply to post-tonal music that does not assume a periodic meter.

To illustrate the development of my analyses, I have chosen an example representative of Hyla's style from *Dream of Innocent III* (*DOI3*) (1987) for amplified cello, piano, and percussion. The excerpt in Example 1 shows measures 159 to 166 from the cello part, which comes from the middle of the piece. The following discussion begins with GTTM's grouping structure and metrical structure before outlining the issues guiding the incorporation of metrical stress theory.

Grouping structure reflects the auditory perception of rhythms irrespective of the conventions of tonality. Hyla's music can be understood through grouping structure, particularly because the changes that mark boundaries are often extreme. Characteristic features of Hyla's temporal approach evident in this example are additive time signatures, time signature changes between almost every measure, a tempo range, and a notated metrical disruption. These details show the temporal complexity of Hyla's music and exhibit some of the issues that inspired my analysis. GTTM's grouping preference rules guide the analysis in Example 1 (see page 63).

Metrical structure does not apply. Primarily, in GTTM's metrical theory the tactus and immediately larger levels must consist of evenly spaced beats, and an examination of the time signatures in Example 1 reveals the interference. Although 2/4 and 3/4 both divide into quarter notes, the 3/4 in measure 165 and the preceding additive time signature of 3/16+2/4 in measure 164 cannot be divided into evenly spaced beats larger than a sixteenth-note. In addition, because this music does not conform to the tonal harmonic tradition, several of the preference rules are immediately invalidated that account for cadences, suspensions, and bass lines.

Linguistic Stress

My analytical framework prioritizes perceptual salience over entrainment to a periodic meter. In lieu of a recurring metrical hierarchy, another system of describing and analyzing emphasis is necessary. In language, emphasis manifests as stress. Thus, the issue of emphasis in music without a periodic meter can be approached through a linguistic framework to revise GTTM's wellformedness rules

and preference rules. The primary perceptual markers of linguistic stress in order of strength are pitch contour, duration, and loudness, none of which are peculiar to language. As such, linguistic stress can translate to music.

Metrical stress theory was formalized in 1977 by Mark Liberman and Alan Prince[4] and expanded in 1995 by Hayes. The central claim of the theory is that stress is the manifestation of rhythm in language. Language does not contain perfectly regular intervals between stresses, so the rhythms do not align to a periodic metric framework. Thus, this theory is particularly valuable to analyzing music without periodic meter. Stress theory begins at the syllable level and expands into larger groups at each hierarchical level. Example 2 shows an application of the theory from Hayes' book. Groups are notated with parentheses, and each syllable receives a dot or an X at the lowest level, with X's representing the head or most stressed event of each group.

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(                       x     )
(         x     )(      x     )
( x  .  )( x  .  )(  x  )(x  .  )
Belgian farmers grow turnips
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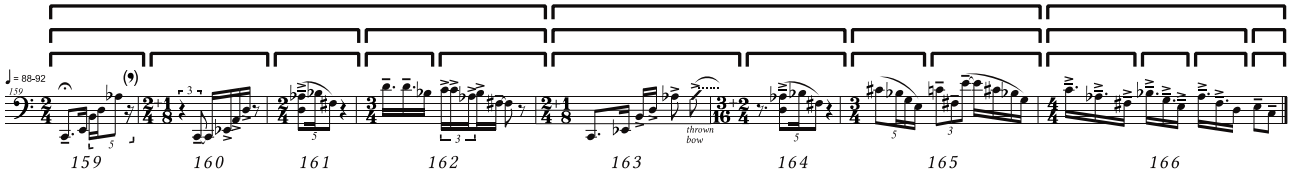
Example 2: Metrical Stress Theory Application[5]

Perceptual Hierarchy of Emphasis

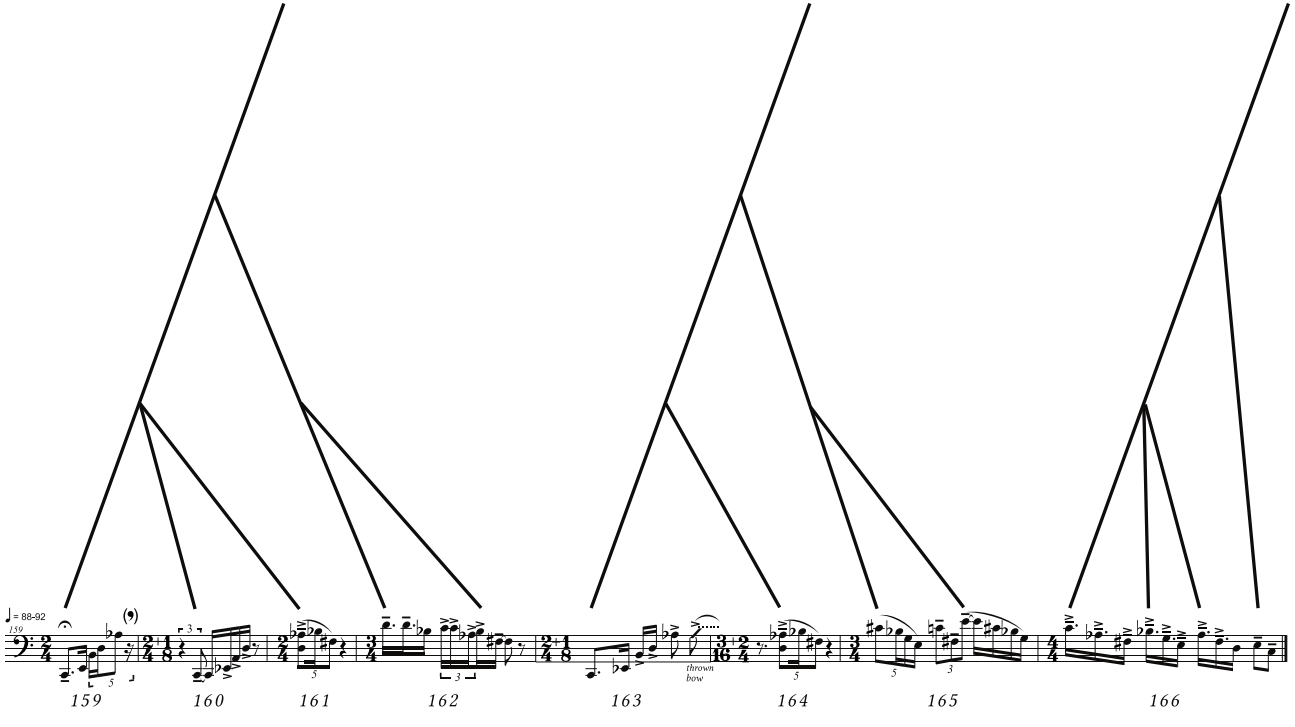
My approach to analysis includes grouping structure and *prominence structure*, for which I have developed rules based on metrical stress theory. I then translate my analyses into tree structures that outline the perceptual hierarchy of events, with relatively more prominent notes connecting to lines at the top of the diagram. The perceptual indicators of stress in language lead to a few rule suggestions: stress aligns with the relatively highest or lowest pitch, stress aligns with relatively longer notes, and stress aligns with relatively louder notes but not very strongly. Example 3 illustrates a prototype of my framework as applied to measures 159 to 166 of *DOI3*, the example discussed above. The tree diagrams show clearly similar structures. The first two represent similar material, but they vary in length and local detail. The third tree is similar to the other two despite its length of four quarter notes. This excerpt shows that underlying patterns and structures exist in Hyla's music that can be described without reference to periodic isochronous meter.

4 Liberman/Prince 1977.

5 Hayes 1995, 369.



Example 1: Hyla, *Dream of Innocent III*, mm. 159–166, cello: grouping structure



Example 3: Hyla, *Dream of Innocent III*, mm. 159–166, cello: prototype of my analytical framework

Hyla's music challenges performers to approach temporal structures without a perceptible meter. Most analytical systems prioritize harmony over rhythm, but Hyla's aesthetic depends largely on the rhythm in his music, a factor deeply shaped by the nonclassical influences on his music. Through my analytical approach, performers can address phrasing and form according to temporality. My research can be valuable to the perspective of both the performer and the analyst, and further exploration could reveal how my methodology applies to composers other than Hyla. My analyses also highlight an unstudied connection between music and language by addressing the hierarchy of events through perceptual prominence.

My analytical framework relates several musical features together to aid in parsing the phrasing of music with popular influences and to show how gesture forms the basis of temporal structure in Hyla's music. My methodology ideally applies to many kinds of postmodern music, offering a framework within which to understand the articulation and apprehension of phrase and structure.

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