

For Carl Schachter

Telemann's (Ir)regular Ritornellos or,
 Durational Idioms in Baroque Phrase Rhythm¹

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To quote from Arthur Maisel's tribute to Carl Schachter, in Carl's *Festschrift*,

As paradoxical as it might seem, Carl's teaching has helped me persist in writing music he doesn't recognize as tonal and analyzing repertoire that falls outside the Schachterian purview (such as Gershwin, Berg, and Ives). Such is the generosity of a great teacher.²

Carl's contributions to the study of temporality—the notion of tonal rhythm, the procedure of durational reduction, the insights into meter, hypermeter, and expansion, to name but a few—are indispensable to understanding the intricacies of Baroque phrase rhythm, and especially to studying the temporal practice of Baroque composers who fall outside the canonic orbit of Bach, Handel, and Scarlatti.³ The music of Georg Philipp Telemann hardly resides within the Schachterian purview, yet it benefits tremendously from the application of Carl's trailblazing work.

To gain insights into the intricacies of Baroque temporal practice, however, we must also consider the idioms, some of them unfamiliar, that are common to all

¹ I thank Steven Zohn, John Reef, and Floyd Grave for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

² Maisel 2006, 282.

³ See, in particular, Schachter 1999.

composers of the high Baroque. In approaching Telemann's music, and particularly in assaying the intricacies of his ritornello themes, awareness of these metrical idioms is crucial to understanding the durational design of the music. The examples I have chosen are metrically colorful and perplexing, but not intractable. Consider the following, from the E-flat Trio Sonata from *Musique de table*,⁴ to which I shall return in the closing pages of this study (Example 1). The four-bar theme—the *Vordersatz* of a large ritornello—is evidently displaced by an eighth note to the left, projecting a visual upbeat that may or may not be genuine. Yet both the displacement and the visual upbeat vanish, as if by magic, by the time the theme ends, in the middle of bar 4. Describing the theme accurately hinges on both metrical analysis and knowledge of the kinds of durational idioms I will be discussing.

So before I begin, I'd like to introduce two such idioms via examples that are likely to be familiar to the reader. The first is the explicit or implicit statement, at the opening of a three-part ritornello (or other theme that plays the same role), of what I refer to as the *pedal call*; and the second is the gradual reduction or enlargement of segments, subphrases, and phrases within the boundaries of a ritornello.

In the da capo of the third movement of Bach's fifth Brandenburg Concerto, in its better-known second version, BWV 1050, we find a particularly emphatic pedal call—the sonorous downbeat that sets the stage for the metrics and hypermetrics of the repeated A¹ section, and also sets the stage for the substantial metrical displacement that ensues (Example 2a). At the beginning of the movement,

⁴ TWV 42:Es1.

however, and throughout the first version of the Concerto, BWV 1050a, Bach omits the pedal call—it is implicit (Examples 2b and 2c).⁵ Since metrical displacement might be involved, it is important to keep the possibility of an implied pedal tone in mind.

The second durational idiom is well illustrated by the reduction in the length of segments in the opening ritornello from the second movement of Handel's Concerto Grosso in B minor, Op. 6, No. 12, where a three-bar sequential *Vordersatz* is followed by a two-bar *Fortspinnung* (standing on the submediant, as it were) and by a one-bar cadential *Epilog*. This reduction is not quite the same as the *liquidation* we constantly encounter in the Schoenbergian sentence (Example 3).

The gradual enlargement of a ritornello is best illustrated by the opening 16 measures of Scarlatti's Sonata in B minor, K. 27 (Example 4), where the opening three-bar *Vordersatz* first gives way to a three-bar *Fortspinnung* (bars 1-3, 4-7). The *Vordersatz* then returns as a four-bar group (bars 7-10), and the *Fortspinnung* returns as a six-bar group (bars 11-16). This enlargement, for its part, has little to do with expansion, at least not the *expansion* (*Dehnung*) we often meet in Schenkerian theory.

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Let us begin our quest in earnest with several ritornellos that exhibit *tonal rhythm*, and at the same time show a reduction or enlargement in their internal

⁵ See Bach 1975, 30ff. The pedal call is usually associated with metrical displacement to the right, or (to look at it another way) with what Andrew Wilson calls *arrival meter* (see fn. 15, below).

groupings. Tonal rhythm, a cornerstone of Carl Schachter's legacy, has been most succinctly defined by John Reef as

... the ways that tonal events give temporal shape to segments. This shaping derives from the durations not of actual notes but of the tonal configurations that they represent, and it occurs at various structural levels.⁶

In the *Gratioso*, the slow movement of Telemann's A major Concerto for flute, violin, and 'cello from *Musique de table*,⁷ the many repetitions in bars 3-6 make us wonder whether Telemann calls upon phrase suffixes to secure a folklike or rustic durational texture; after all, it is well established that Telemann, by his own admission, was heavily influenced by the Polish folk music he heard during his stay in Sorau, between 1705 and 1708.⁸ But these repetitions are not in fact literal—each repetition plays a part in realizing the underlying tonal, metric, and rhythmic events of the movement (Example 5).

The two reductions in Example 6, a and b, feature a telltale sign of tonal rhythm: The tonal reduction at a) resembles the simple rhythmic reduction at b). The essence of both reductions is an *arpeggiated* descent from e^2 to a^1 in bars 1-3 that is filled in by a *stepwise* descent from the implicitly sustained e^2 to d^2 , $c\#^2$, and b^1 in bars 4-6. The two descents are linked by an interlocking stepwise ascent from a^1 to b^1 and $c\#^2$ in bars 3-5, and by a deeper ascent from a^1 to b^1 that spans the

⁶ Reef 2014, 94.

⁷ TWV 53:A2.

⁸ Zohn 2008, 471-502.

entirety of bars 3-6 (see the square brackets in Example 6b). The unfolding signs in the tonal reduction at 6b) show how all these motions link with each other. The tonal reduction also illustrates how the falling arpeggiation $e^2-c\#^2-a^1$, and the rising step a^1-b^1 , to which it binds, are enlarged over the span of the entire theme.

As for metrics and hypermetrics, the plain rhythmic reduction at a) shows how an implicit hypermetrical 12/8 in bars 1-2 condenses to an implicit 9/8 in bars 3-5 and to a more explicit, metrical 6/8 in bar 6. This is a somewhat hidden metric/hypermetric version of the reduction in grouping that we encountered in the Handel Concerto Grosso example. My experience has been that similar reductions in grouping or hypermeter in Telemann's ritornellos are similarly hidden; I have coined the slightly ominous term STR—"self-truncating ritornello"—to describe them.

We find one of those examples in the second-movement ritornello of Telemann's relatively familiar D major Trumpet Concerto (Example 7; the rhythmic and tonal reductions appear in Examples 8a and 8b).⁹ Here we encounter an ascent from d^2 to a^2 and to a neighboring b^2 in bars 1-2; it is followed by a gradual descent back to d^2 via an unfolding with an inner-voice ascent from d^1 to e^2 and $f\#^2$ in bars 1, 3, and 4. The rhythmic reduction at a) demonstrates that the opening three measures, which appear to be a single group (not to say a hypermeasure), in notated 4/4 time, already signal—internally—a division of this group into two measures of 6/4 time: compare the neighbor-note parallelisms a^2-b^2 and $e^2-f\#^2$, which are

⁹ TWV 51:D7

readily visible in Example 8a. The internal division of bars 1-3 into two bars of 6/4 catches the listener and reader of the score unawares, offguard—could or would a fast-moving allegro in 4/4 time project 6/4 time? Yes, it could, and under these circumstances Telemann's more visible and audible reduction to one-measure grouping in bar 4 and, further, to a half-measure segment in bar 5, acquires an enhanced, indeed unsettled feel. Obviously, the line between grouping, meter, and hypermeter is particularly thin here.

To complicate matters, the aforementioned neighbor-note repetitions are not fundamentally identical (see Example 8b): The first ($a^2-b^2-a^2$) places greater tonal emphasis on the repeated group, which presents a structural neighbor note, b^2 (it resolves to a passing a^2 only in bar 5); the second ($e^2-f\#^2-e^2$) has no structural tonal function. It fills in the time slot of the second 6/4 measure.

Considerations of space, and the strain of reading innumerable ledger lines, preclude a very detailed examination of the ritornello from the concerto-like Rondeau of the D minor Quartet for recorder (or bassoon), two flutes, and continuo from *Musique de table*,¹⁰ but it is worth dwelling on some of its tonal and durational features, if only in passing. Example 9 presents the score; Example 10, a and b, offers rhythmic and tonal reductions.

The middleground-octave descent from d^3 to d^2 , which almost overrides the two descents of David Neumeier's three-part *Ursatz* across the entire ritornello, responds to the initial foray into the three-line octave in bar 1. Most noteworthy

¹⁰ TWV 43:d1. The recorder part may be played on a bassoon or a 'cello.

here is the prominence of the underlying double voice exchanges in bars 2-3 and 7-8; see the reduction in the lower system of Example 10b. What appears on the surface to be two pairs of repeated measures (with a variant in the bass) comprises in fact two groups of descending steps. Equally remarkable, durationally, is the growth of the three-bar groups in bars 1-6 to four-bar groups in bars 7-14. We might refer to this growth as SER—a self-expanding ritornello.¹¹

It is important to note that the many sequential expansions shown by means of parentheses in Example 10a are what I call *essential expansions*: They play a major role in articulating the tonal and durational design, and they cannot be reduced out.¹² As such, they generate an effective tension between—again—the unsettled feel at the surface, and the more even flow of the structure below. (Recall the repetitions in my earlier examples—they could not be reduced out either.) Along the same lines, even the many repetitions in the last four measures—the *Epilog*—cannot be reduced out. Within the framework of the 3+3 and 4+4 scheme, they make up the substance of the *Epilog*.

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With that we arrive at several instances of hemiola, counterstress, and their associates—metrical reinterpretation and what I call *metrical invasion*. These link the opening gesture as well as the later passagework of the Andante from

¹¹ I refer to this phenomenon as *incremental periodicity* in Willner 2007^b, 13, and in my dissertation, chapters 1 and 5.

¹² For more on sequential expansions in general and essential expansions in particular see Willner 1999.

Telemann's A minor Violin Concerto¹³ with the ritornello of the ensuing Allegro (Examples 11 and 12). The Andante presents what sounds like an oddly beautiful hemiola in bars 1-2, thanks to the different metrical positions of two groups of six sixteenths in the solo theme. But a closer look reveals a more complex, if only apparent or potential, metrical reinterpretation (see the numbers on top of the hemiola brackets and the asterisk in Example 11a). The opening pedal call on C displaces the solo violin's entrance by a quarter note to the right; the downbeat of bar 2 is the third beat of the violin's opening 2 3 1 gambit; and the time-span of that downbeat is invaded by the upbeat to the violin's ensuing 2 3 1 gesture, which closes at the downbeat of bar 3. See the asterisks in Examples 11a and 11b, and the schematic reduction in Example 11c. It is the articulation of this apparent *metrical invasion* that is responsible for the substantial hemiola and metrical reinterpretation effects. Which of these two ultimately prevails? Even at a time when the notion of hemiola and my interpretation of the cadential hemiola are under siege,¹⁴ it is hard to escape from that age-old idiom, at least not here: As the diagram in Example 11c shows, both the principal and the invasive motives participate in creating the opening hemiola (and later ones as well).

Once the dominant has been reached in bar 9, a bass entrance and an ensuing solo violin entrance provoke a series of densely overlapping hemiolas and (real) metrical reinterpretations of the type one would expect to find in an imitative rather than in a lyrical setting.

¹³ TWV 51:a2.

¹⁴ Grant 2014, 86-90; see especially p. 88, fn. 40.

The Andante's theme begins with a suggestive statement of g^2-e^2 , and then proceeds to work out that tonal space. Both as an interval and as a gesture, g^2-e^2 is recalled in bar 2 of the third movement, Presto, where the half-note counterstresses, G and E, on the first and third beats, clash with the quarter-note motive of bar 1, which contains an upbeat (Example 12a). Underscored by the high G natural in bar 2, which in turn clashes with the G# at bar 1, the two counterstressed tones of bar 2 not only connect with the Andante's opening metrical discord but also create enough tension to promote the Presto's developmental continuation within the very same space (not shown).

It is important to keep in mind, though, that the counterstress on the two half notes, far from being a special invention specific to this Presto, is a thematic and durational idiom, if not a particularly common one, that we also find in other pieces by Telemann, Rameau, and Handel; see Example 13, in triple meter, from Handel's Concerto Grosso in C minor, Op. 6, No. 8.

As one can observe by noting (and listening to) the dotted half note E at the double bar of Telemann's Presto (Example 12b), a pedal call of the same length may be inferred at the very beginning. The reason for the pedal call's omission here has to do both with establishing the rapid tempo of the movement and with avoiding two strong measures in a row at the wrong moment. Most pedal calls of the Baroque—explicit or implicit—fall within the strong-weak metrical framework of the movement which they begin, but a pedal call here would not. Indeed, pedal calls are avoided altogether if they interfere unduly with (rather than support) the

movement's metrical framework. The matter is an important one because experiencing an implicit pedal call may be essential to a proper understanding and a correct parsing of the movement in question: If nothing else (as we shall see presently), pedal calls that reside within the metrical framework occasion displacement to the right.¹⁵

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The larger picture drawn by the foregoing observations allows us to return to the E-flat Trio Sonata from Telemann's *Musique de table* with which I began this paper. The opening four-bar theme I had quoted in Example 1 constitutes the *Vordersatz* of a large-scale ritornello that spans the entire first reprise.¹⁶ Here it is again (Example 14). In Example 15, I present three versions of the theme, each with an added, implicit pedal call. At a), the theme is redisplayed one eighth note to the right, without the original eighth-note displacement evident at the outset; at b), it unfolds as notated by Telemann, displaced by an eighth to the left of the barline; and at c), it is displaced by three eighth notes to the left of the barline (the result at c looks admittedly a little strange because of the addition of the pedal call). Under the first violin part at c), I bracketed the length of the segments that make up the theme

¹⁵ In doing so they introduce what Andrew Wilson has called *arrival meter* (Wilson 2016): Arrival in the sense that the theme (displaced or not) aims at the strong downbeat of its closing measure. Arrival meter is less associated with displacement than with the long upbeats (linked to national styles) preferred by William Rothstein (2008). However we look at this phenomenon, it does not often constitute what we regard (and, more important, hear) as "irregularity," at least not in the Baroque repertoire. The opening of Telemann's Trio Sonata movement may be the exception that proves the rule.

¹⁶ Not a ritornello in the solo-and-tutti sense, but a reprise that, like many others, borrows the *Vordersatz-Fortspinnung-Epilog* scheme from the concerto format, on a large scale.

in the same way in all three versions. (Displacing the theme to the left, to the middle of the measure, need not detain us, since it would have much the same result as the displacement at a.)

The version at a), which begins with the notated meter, doesn't work because it ends on the weakest part of bar 4; it also does not permit a proper transition to the developmental sequences that follow. Further, in this version, the contents of bar 4 are displaced, awkwardly, by one eighth to the left.

At c), I try to show what would have happened had Telemann shifted the theme by a further two eighth notes to the left of the barline instead of an eighth to the right. Now the theme closes into bar 5, and again overlaps in a breathless, ungainly way with the ensuing *Fortspinnung*.

The version at b), the one Telemann uses, displaces only the opening three measures of the theme by one eighth to the left—not the entire theme: Bar 4 follows the notated meter. Telemann shifts seamlessly from displacement to notation by gradually shortening the segments that make up the theme, in just the manner I discussed at the outset of this paper (recall the Handel B minor Concerto Grosso and the Telemann Trumpet Concerto examples, nos. 3 and 7-8), only on a much smaller scale. The curly brackets at Example 15c show how the four eighths in bars 1-2 give way to three eighths as they cross into bar 3 (hidden by an overlap at the syncopation of the high, quarter-note B \flat in the middle of bar 3), and to two eighths in bar 4. The overlap and syncopation are shown in Example 15d. The reason that this shift from 4 to 3, and then from 3 to 2, is so seamless is that both the two violins' and the continuo's 1 2 3 4 motives can be easily articulated as 1 2 3 motives; see

again Example 15d. Under these circumstances, one can see and hear how the two 1 2 3 motives overlap at the high Bb, as Example 15d shows, promoting the effect of foreshortening.

In all three versions it is idiomatically possible to imagine a pedal call, composed out to introduce the bass pattern of three eighths and also to prevent the melody from beginning *in medias res*. At a) and at c), the pedal call is an integral part of the theme's four-bar length. At b), however, it resides outside that length and acts only as a vamp (like many pedal calls in later repertoires, but unlike most pedal calls in the Baroque repertoire).¹⁷ Telemann left it out precisely in order to secure just that unsettled sense of beginning in the middle. Even so, its inclusion is a possibility we must consider as part of the analytical process.

And what of the two *Fortspinnungs* and the *Epilogs* that follow? (see bars 5ff and 21ff; these are annotated in Example 16). The *Fortspinnungs*, by way of development, follow the notated meter (a developmental ploy in Baroque music when displacement is paramount); and the *Epilogs*, of which the first is shown in Example 16, return to the opening displacement, at least initially. If both *Fortspinnungs* and *Epilogs* sound suspiciously familiar, it is because Johannes Brahms used some of the same material in the B and A¹ sections (and, by extension, at the beginning) of the third movement, the *Allegro molto moderato e comodo*, of his C minor String Quartet, Op. 51, No. 1 (compare the brackets in Examples 16 and 17).

¹⁷ In my paper about Bar 0 (Willner 2007^a) I did not make that distinction sufficiently clear.

Brahms's extended falling sequence, his imitative play of rising and falling thirds, and his characteristic suspensions all correspond to the rising sequence, syncopations, and imitative rising thirds that articulate Telemann's second *Fortspinnung* (see the square brackets in both Examples 16 and 17).¹⁸

And Brahms's sixteenth-note falling steps, in particular, are identical to those in Telemann's first *Epilog* (see the corresponding curly brackets in both Examples). Brahms plays out both the developmental sequence and the following steps in very slow motion, and his large sequence falls; Telemann's sequence is rapid, and it rises, and the falling steps that follow are feverish. But there is little doubt in my mind that Telemann's spinning-out is the joyous source for Brahms's doleful lamentations.

To conclude, let us consider Telemann's sequence and steps quickly again: It is as if Buster Keaton and Harold Bloom conspired to speed up, and lighten up, the later composer's elegiac syncopations and tearful steps.

¹⁸ Brahms's Quartet dates from 1873 (first edition, edited by Hans Gál; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel), whereas Telemann's Trio Sonata was not published until 1900 (edited by Hugo Riemann; Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel). Given Brahms's involvement with early music, it would seem likely that he came into contact with Telemann's Trio Sonata via an eighteenth-century edition or a manuscript copy, or perhaps a performance therefrom.

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