



Tracing the Development of Schenkerian Diminution

by

Devin Guerrero

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Tracing the Development of Schenkerian Diminution

Thesis title

Devin Guerrero

Written by

For a Master's Degree in Music Theory/Schenkerian notion

Keith Waters

Main Advisor

DocuSigned by:
Keith Waters
Signature
41013879DF8F4D2...

5/26/2021

Date

Yonatan Malin

2nd Advisor

DocuSigned by:
Yonatan Malin
Signature
F9ADCE6B818B426...

5/27/2021

Date

Philip Chang

3rd Advisor

DocuSigned by:
Philip Chang
Signature
02465B019E92438...

5/27/2021

Date

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Abstract

Devin Guerrero

Name & Title

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Keith Waters

Professor of Music

Directing Professor & Title

Schenkerian notions of diminution describe musical content as an outgrowth of the Ursatz. I suggest that this version of diminution developed from other historical notions of the term. My investigation of three essays will suggest that Schenker's earlier writings adumbrate the theories of diminution that only appear in full in his latest essays. The three stages examined begin with "A Contribution to Ornamentation" ("Ein Beitrag zur Ornamentik," 1904), continues with an essay from the first volume of *The Masterwork in Music*, "The Art of Improvisation" (*Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, "Die Kunst der Improvisation," 1925), and finishes with a translation of "On Diminution" ("Von der Diminution," 1937), an essay from the nine-issue periodical *The Triad* (*Der Dreiklang*)—that essay is partially included in *Free Composition* (*Der Freie Satz*, 1935), Schenker's final compendium of theories. In conjunction with these essays are stages of diminution: 1) ornamentation of a melody, 2) ornamentation of a harmonic ground plan, 3) ornamentation derived from the framework as the composition.