

## A Note from the Editors

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Contemplating Caplin

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## CONTEMPLATING CAPLIN: A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

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It is with great pleasure that we present “Contemplating Caplin,” a Festschrift issue of *Intersections* dedicated to the application of an analytical approach that has been rigorously developed by our celebrated colleague, William Caplin, 2011 Killam Fellow and James McGill Professor at McGill University, where he has been on faculty since 1978. Since the publication of his field-defining *Classical Form* (1998), Caplin’s work on formal function has been hailed as a landmark contribution to the literature. For both pedagogues and students of classical form, the book is a tour de force. Reviving the *Formenlehre* approach established during the first half of the twentieth century by Arnold Schoenberg (1967) and Erwin Ratz (1951), it sets out to place this historical tradition “on a more secure and sophisticated foundation” (Caplin 1998, 3). Michael Spitzer (2000, 110) has characterized Caplin’s work as “nothing less than a new theory of form for the music of the Classical period.” According to Floyd Grave (1998), “Caplin’s approach, buttressed by methodological rigor and theoretical detail, makes a persuasive case for the revival of *Formenlehre* as a pedagogical tool and analytical discipline.” Warren Darcy (2000, 122) has called *Classical Form* “one of the most important books on musical form to appear in the twentieth century” and “an important and impressive statement that no theorist or musicologist can afford to ignore” (127). As significant as Caplin’s contribution has been for scholars of classical form, it has also had remarkable resonance in other areas of theoretical inquiry. Modifications and extensions of Caplin’s work have included recent work on phrase structure in Schumann (Martin 2010), Wagner (BaileyShea 2002/2003; 2003), Liszt (Vande Moortele, forthcoming), Bartok (Broman 2007), Rochberg (Bor 2009), and seventeenth-century contredanse (Neumeyer 2006).

In “theorizing” about musical style, questions inevitably arise concerning the validity of constructing a somewhat abstracted theoretical template as a lens through which to examine a diverse and idiosyncratic repertoire. Among the many distinguished theorists who have offered some clarification on such epistemological issues, Carl Dahlhaus is perhaps the most prominent. For Dahlhaus, with whom Caplin studied at the Technische Universität Berlin during the 1970s, a critical distinction between theory and analysis is required: theory always favours the quest for general principles, whereas analysis tends to begin with the individual art work and thus favours particularism (Dahlhaus 1983). Viewed in this light, Caplin’s goals are arguably more “theoretically” oriented, whereas much of the work music theorists do in their daily teaching and research is somewhat more “analytical” in nature. In the present volume, theory and analysis meet somewhere in the middle. Caplin’s theory establishes

a point of departure, but when the music under examination is recalcitrant, or the listening experience leads to conclusions that are perhaps not accounted for by the theory, questions concerning possible modifications, extensions or adaptations arise. At a special session devoted to Caplin's work at the 2010 annual meeting of the Canadian University Music Society, lively debates of precisely this kind took place. In publishing "Contemplating Caplin," our goal is to make these valuable discussions more widely available.

Edward Jurkowski's contribution explores a repertory that has received relatively scant attention from musicologists. Examining Clementi's six "Progressive Sonatinas," op. 36, Jurkowski demonstrates how the composer's formal approach to the sonatina—a genre generally associated with early piano pedagogy and viewed as the sonata's "immature" younger sibling—is more nuanced than previously thought. Through his analyses, Jurkowski proposes a new understanding of sonatina form and makes a compelling case for an analytic approach to this repertoire that incorporates the conceptual fusion of some of Caplin's formal functions.

Mark Richards challenges Caplin's notion that location within the phrase and harmonic considerations alone determine cadential function. In his assessment of the role of melody and texture in articulating closure, Richards introduces new cadential vocabulary, coining the term *closural function* for situations where idiosyncratic endings serve as cadential substitutes, and *separated cadence* to account for situations where melodic voices achieve closure at different points in time.

Carl Wiens explores the distinction between sonata expositions arriving at the subordinate-key dominant in the closing cadence of a two-part transition, and those that reach the new dominant at the cadence internal to a two-part subordinate theme. Wiens argues that subtle analytical distinctions of this kind are informed by comparing the structure of the exposition's themes and transition with those of the recapitulation.

William Caplin is given the final word. In his response to our contributors, he supports some of the conclusions they have offered, but he disputes others and provides further elaboration on many of the analytical issues at hand.

In adhering to a dialogic format, we have sought to capture the spirit of the original conference session. However, the contributions to this issue are not simply transcripts of the papers presented in 2010. They have been rewritten, edited, and expanded to reflect further dialogue that has taken place since that time and during the preparation of this issue. It is our hope that "Contemplating Caplin" will be read not only by a music theory readership but also by the uninitiated, for whom it might serve as a helpful point of entry to Caplin's work.

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