



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING

Society for Music Theory

[Letter from Eytan Agmon]

Author(s): Eytan Agmon

Source: *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1992), pp. 114-116

Published by: [University of California Press](#) on behalf of the [Society for Music Theory](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/746088>

Accessed: 17/01/2011 17:16

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=ucal>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of California Press and Society for Music Theory are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Music Theory Spectrum*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Communications

To the Editor:

In his article, “Tonal and Formal Dualism in Chopin’s Scherzo, Op. 31” (*Music Theory Spectrum* Vol. 13, no. 1 [1991]), Harald Krebs draws attention to the finding that the conspicuous inner-voice motives in the A-major and C#-minor areas of the Scherzo’s middle section are not only related (see Example 1, after Krebs’s Example 4), but are part of a much larger motivic web which encompasses the entire work (pp. 54–57).

While Krebs must be commended for emphasizing this latter point, I believe he is mistaken in tracing the motivic network’s origin to the Scherzo’s opening triplet figure (mm. 1–4); rather, I believe, the origin may be found in the *fortissimo* sub-phrase which follows (Example 2). The “Ur-motive,” so to speak, may be described as a truncated double-neighbor figure: lower neighbor, main tone (which actually functions as a passing tone), upper neighbor, and main tone; in the trio, the upper neighbor is embellished with a “secondary” upper neighbor, which adds a characteristic, poignant flavor to the figure. (In addition, the return of the main tone is anticipated, and, in the C#-minor version, the lower neighbor is raised chromatically.)

The motivic connection between mm. 5–9 of the Scherzo (Example 2) and the opening measures of the trio (Example 1a) is part of a much deeper connection that involves the rhythmic and harmonic domains as well. Measures 6 and 266 are both syncopated *second* measures in their respective four-measure groups; this is clarified in Example 3, which shows underlying harmonic, as well as rhythmic, similarities. “Motivic connection,” therefore, does not adequately describe the relation that exists between the scherzo and trio sections. The

Example 1

(a)

(b)

Example 2

Example 3

relation, rather, is one of *thematic transformation*; indeed, Chopin has produced one of the most inspired such transformations I am aware of.

Since Krebs has raised the issue of motivic connections between the scherzo and trio sections, it is important to realize the important role played by the above-mentioned rhythmic idea of a syncopated second (hyper-) beat. The scherzo section ends with a bare statement of this idea (Ex-

ample 4a); after the written-out repeat, the trio of course follows, and thus the connection between the two contrasting sections in terms of rhythmic syncopation is made explicit. Moreover, the left-hand syncopations in the trio's E-major area may be seen as rhythmic diminutions of the same idea (Example 4b); the left hand's striking offbeat *sforzandos* in the Scherzo's opening section (Example 4c) may also be explained in the same way.

Example 4

(a)

Example 4(a) shows a piano score in 3/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) has a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, marked with '8-1' and '8-...1'. The left hand (bass clef) has a bass line with eighth notes and rests, marked with '125 (= 257)'. The score is divided into measures 1 through 4, with a bracket under measures 1-4 labeled 'coll' 8^{va} bassa'. A measure rest for 2 measures is indicated at the end of the first system.

(b)

Example 4(b) shows a piano score in 3/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) has a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, marked with '350'. The left hand (bass clef) has a bass line with eighth notes and rests, marked with '350'. The score is divided into measures 1 through 4, with a bracket under measures 1-4.

(c)

Example 4(c) shows a piano score in 3/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) has a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, marked with '18'. The left hand (bass clef) has a bass line with eighth notes and rests, marked with '18'. The score is divided into measures 1 through 4, with a bracket under measures 1-4. A measure rest for 2 measures is indicated at the end of the first system.

Turning back now to the main issue, it is my belief that the term *nota cambiata*, by which Krebs refers to the motivic connections which he sees between the work's contrasting sections, is unfortunate. Not only does the idea of a *nota cambiata* figure obscure the seminal motivic significance of mm. 5–9, where a leap of a third is lacking (Krebs regards only mm. 148–149—a varied restatement of mm. 8–9—as carrying motivic significance); insistence on this idea may lead one to draw some highly questionable motivic connections, as I believe Krebs does when he includes mm. 1–4 within the same motivic network. For the upward leap of a third, which characterizes the motive's appearance in the trio (see Example 1), is a leap to a secondary upper neighbor, and thus, in a sense, to a doubly dissonant tone. (In the so-called “*nota cambiata*” figure of species counterpoint, incidentally, one cannot leap to a tone dissonant in relation to the cantus.) In mm. 1–4, however, the leap from B \flat to D \flat is part of a consonant tonic arpeggiation. Is it really meaningful to say, therefore, that mm. 1–4 and (for example) 265–69 embody the same motive (leaving aside, for the moment, the addi-

tional problem of having to “revise” Chopin's F's in mm. 1–4)?

Finally, Krebs observes that his “*nota cambiata* figure” connects the end of the “development section” with the beginning of the “recapitulation” (see his Example 6). Again, I agree with Krebs concerning the *existence* of such a connection; however, it should be clear by now that I disagree concerning the specific connection that he cites. In my interpretation (see Example 5), the connection involves not only “intervallic similarity,” but actual pitch content as well. Since the inner-voice “triplet motive” of mm. 310ff. (C \sharp minor) is transposed now to B \flat minor, it is a matter only of changing E \natural ($\natural\hat{4}$) to E \flat and removing the secondary upper-neighbor A \flat , for the connection with mm. 591–92 (= mm. 8–9) to become unmistakable. The cycle of motivic connections is thus complete.

Eytan Agmon
Bar-Ilan University
Israel

Example 5

The image displays musical notation for Example 5, consisting of two systems of piano music. The first system shows measures 544 and 552. Measure 544 features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a single eighth note in the left hand. Measure 552 continues the triplet motif. The second system shows measure 588, which is marked as being equivalent to measure 5. This measure also features a triplet motif. The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble and bass clefs, key signatures (three flats), and dynamic markings like 'etc.'.