

MUSIC ANALYSIS BY COMPUTER: A CONFERENCE REPORT

A conference on Computer Studies in Music, organized by Ian Bent and John Morehen, was held at Nottingham University, UK, July 6–9. Twenty-three scholars attended, and three areas of focus emerged: music printing, editorial work, and analysis. Harry Lincoln from the State University of New York at Binghamton opened the proceedings with a description of his catalogue of incipits of 16th-century vocal music, showing how the catalogue had been printed and how multi-parameter sorting could be used for style analysis. Other contributors in the field of music printing were Mme. Hélène Charnassé of Paris and Richard Vendome of Oxford. Mme Charnassé discussed the programming method for her publications of lute tablature in staff notation, and showed a film of her computer in process of printing. Richard Vendome's examples won universal admiration but raised questions of commercial viability.

John Morehen spoke of his use of the machine to create editorial decisions on word underlay from a statistical analyzed database, and in his work the two primary virtues of the computer as human equipment become apparent: its perfect accuracy (within, of course, the terms of the program) and immense speed.

Dr. Norbert Böker-Heil of Berlin introduced both his highly sophisticated techniques of programming for analysis and the analysis itself. Arguing that "the tools of common sense of traditional music theory are inadequate," he demonstrated a scheme based on pattern matching and normalization, but able also to show linear tendency. Robert Fraser from Edinburgh put forward a diagrammatic presentation of rhythmic structure in a hierarchic mode, and James Shell of the University of Rochester described in a most stimulating paper his systematization of Schenkerian analysis in the search for general reductive/generative rules. In the final session the present writer reviewed the proceedings and raised the question of diachronic versus synchronic style analysis. Following this there was a discussion of methods of national and international coordination in computer-assisted musicology.

The conference gave ample opportunity for new friendships and contacts to be formed; and in such a relatively young and fragmented subject this may prove to be of more than ordinary importance.

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