

UDC-78

## INTEGRATION OF SCHENKERIAN ANALYSIS AND NEO-RIEMANNIAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN LISZT'S TRANSCENDENTAL ÉTUDE NO. 1

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### **Summary:**

*Multiple analytical approaches exist to examine tonal music and the establishment of innovative paradigms allows one to associate repertoire with the evolution of compositional style. Schenkerian analysis is one of the examples of such applied theory that surveys the structure of a tonal work and studies the surface of the piece from the standpoint of harmonic functions and elaborations (Cadwallader, 2011). On the contrary, Neo-Riemannian theory presents transformational relationships and shifts between numerous major and minor harmonies, resulting in a distinct model of voice leading in a tonal context (Cohn, 1996). This research combines both theories and employs them to dissect the function of harmony in Liszt's Transcendental Étude No. 1. The Schenkerian view of the étude presents a  $\hat{3}\text{-}\hat{1}$  Urlinie line as a background structure with interruption before the initialization of the B-section in m. 14, as well as explains the gravitational dominant-tonic pulls that occur in mm. 7-8 between G Major and C Major, and E Major and A minor. The Neo-Riemannian approach presents a theory behind the interplay of the three harmonic regions of A minor, C major, and F Major, interrelated by the R (relative) and L (leading tone) transformations, seen in mm. 16-23 in the final descent of the Urlinie. The integration of Schenkerian and Neo-Riemannian approaches generates a theoretical model that solves the significant analytical queries in harmony of the opening Transcendental étude.*

**Keywords:** Liszt; Neo-Riemannian analysis; Schenkerian theory

The Romantic period of music brought lots of changes in compositional methods and musical perspectives portrayed by composers, performers, and artists approximately between the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries [1]. The creation of new works generates the process of musical evolution, defined by changes in compositional and musical approaches. As in all stylistic periods, the Romantic-era composers were influenced by their predecessors before expanding on own innovations in music composition – a phenomena that can be observed through the amalgamation of musical analysis and musicology. Today, the Romantic music is fairly prevalent in concert halls and presents music enthusiasts and professionals with lyricism, expressiveness, and mellowness [2].

Due to the large scope of repertoire and the apparent presence of stylistic deviations of Romantic music, theorists have implemented multiple analytical approaches to dissect and understand the Romantic-era compositions. Modern theories in music can analyze and explain a particular work based on rhythm, melody, harmony, counterpoint, notion of consonance and dissonance, form, structure, and other similar components. Such theories have the ability to reveal analytical information in a particular work, as well as distinguish general stylistic trends of the composer responsible for the creation of such music. With that being said, the analysis that implements a theory along with another musical component, such as a supplementary analytical approach, performance practice, or history, will generate a more accurate representation of a composer's work. *Tselostnyi analysis*, also known as

*holistic analysis*, is one of such examples, developed by Zuckerman and Mazel, the purpose of which is to understand the musical work by focusing on the full scope of a composer's artistic endeavor rather than a small element [3]. The holistic analysis allows one to absorb the music as a whole rather than concentrate on a single theoretical or musicological component [4].

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) is a Romantic composer, who is praised for his musical innovations seen from performative and analytical perspectives. The idea of a symphonic poem and the notion of thematic transformation are two of the more prominent novelties in music that Liszt adds to modern musicology. A prolific artist during his lifetime, Liszt implemented a variety of compositional approaches not seen in the works of composers from previous generations. In piano literature, Liszt is notorious for composing arduous and technically-demanding, yet pianistic and lyrical works. Since Liszt's compositional strategies vary, multiple analytical pathways are available for theorists, depending on the genre, the year, and the style of the work. Therefore, a type of analysis appropriate for Liszt's *Liebesträume* (1850) may not be suitable for Piano Sonata in B minor, S. 178 (1854) and is certainly not appropriate for *Bagatelle sans Tonalite* (1855) [5]. This paper focuses on the analysis of an early-Romantic work by Liszt – the opening study of *Études D'exécution Transcendante*, S.139, titled *Preludio* [6].

From perspective of tonal theory, Schenkerian and Neo-Riemannian analyses can be useful when examining tonalities, harmonic regions, and voice leadings. Schenkerian analysis presents one with three distinct readings of a work, labeled by Heinrich Schenker as *foreground*, *middle-ground*, and *background* [7]. Based on the fundamental notions of harmony and counterpoint, the Schenkerian graph reveals the structure of the work through voice leading and defines each note as a fundamental element that serves a particular purpose and function in the full scope of the composition pianistically and analytically [8]. Schenkerian theories are likewise based on a series of elaborations, examples of which are arpeggiation and chromaticism – both particularly useful in the analysis of piano works. The Schenkerian approach allows one to view and understand the unity and coherence between multiple melodic and harmonic components of a piece of music. The study of pianism and artistic choices made by pianists may also be understood and interpreted through the Schenkerian theory. The study of harmony and voice leading can likewise be observed through Neo-Riemannian theory. Particularly useful to late-Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire, the Neo-Riemannian approach focuses on the relationships between multiple harmonic regions without an association to tonic. The Neo-Riemannian theory is based on three transformations, allowing one to move between any keys or harmonic regions. The P-transformation generates a movement between two parallel keys, such as C major & C minor and vice versa. The R-transformation generates a movement between two relative keys, such as C major & A minor and vice versa. The L-transformation generates a movement through the use of a leading tone, such as C major & E minor and vice versa. The primary transformations can serve as a useful tool when building a *PLR* network between multiple tonal regions in a composition. The fundamentals of Neo-Riemannian theory can likewise explain how the keys used by the composer are linked in the grander breadth of the work.

Published in 1852, the twelve études contain some of the most artistic and technically-challenging music. All of the twelve works contrast in difficulty level, where Liszt presents a variety of pianistic techniques that a pianist should focus on. All works are likewise different in length, form, and structure. Some études, such as *Ricordanza* (Étude No. 9) and *Harmonies du Soir* (Étude No. 11) span for approximately ten minutes each while *Preludio*, on the contrary, is the shortest piece in the cycle and is typically performed in under a minute. In *Preludio*, both Schenkerian and Neo-Riemannian analyses are beneficial and can be employed for analytical clarification of various theoretical queries in the score.

Figure 1: Liszt, Transcendental Étude No. 1, mm. 13-23.

*Preludio* typically does not present professional pianists with many technical challenges. However, the notions of chromaticism and arpeggiation are evident pianistically and analytically throughout the work. The  $\hat{3}\text{-}\hat{1}$  *Urlinie* spans through the twenty-three measures with an interruption occurring before the start of the B-section at m. 14. The interruption extends the fundamental line by intersecting the  $\hat{2}\text{-}\hat{1}$  resolution by returning to  $\hat{3}$  supported by the C major harmony, and while the tonic is realized, the *Urlinie* is not, which lengthens the étude and develops the B-section, producing a study in binary form. The Schenkerian interruption likewise presents a prominent analytical issue seen at the end of the work. While the  $\hat{2}\text{-}\hat{1}$  culmination is denied at the *Urlinie* level in m. 14, a dominant-tonic relationship is nonexistent in the harmony of the B-section finale. Liszt avoids the dominant harmonic regions of G major by substituting it with the subdominant harmonic region of F major. The Schenkerian theory holds no clarification for such occurrence, since a gravitational dominant-tonic pull (or an equivalent cadence) is essential to conclude a work and to bring a harmonic progression to a close. The B-section can be seen in Figure 1. The Schenkerian graph of the B-section prominent to the analysis of *Preludio* can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Schenkerian foreground graph of mm. 14-23 of Liszt's Transcendental Étude No. 1.

On the contrary, the Schenkerian theory emphasizes on a succession of alternating dominant-tonic relations that exist on the last beat of m. 6 and conclude on the downbeat of m. 9. The left hand presents a series of harmonic intervals while the right hand complements it with supplementary melodic material to generate a sequence of harmonies. As seen in Figure 3, the two sets of harmonic regions are established with a dominant-tonic relation with G major (V) resolving to C major (I) and E major (V) resolving to A minor (i). From perspective of harmonic analysis, the use of secondary chords can produce V/vi to vi when looking at the E major & A minor relation from perspective of the C major tonic. It is evident that the V-I frequently occurs in the A-section, while lacking presence in the B-section. Liszt builds up the strong V-I presence towards the end of the A-section before presenting a harmonically adventurous transition in mm. 9-13.

The Neo-Riemannian theory can be implemented to define the aspects of analysis that the Schenkerian ideology fails to present. While no primary transformation can turn G major into C major or E major into A minor, the two main resolutions of C major and A minor are interconnected by the R-transformation. The étude is clearly in the key of C major, yet traces of A minor are present and evident, generating hints of relative tonalities. Furthermore, the Neo-Riemannian theory is especially helpful in defining the B-section, where Liszt interchanges the harmonies of C major, A minor, and F major, all of which are interconnected through the use of primary transformations. Therefore, the Neo-Riemannian approach presents a theory behind the interplay of the three harmonic regions, interrelated by the R-transformation and L-transformation, seen in mm. 16-23 in the final descent of the *Uralinie*.

$$R(CM) = Am$$

$$L(Am) = CM$$

Figure 3: A series of V-I segments in mm. 5-8 of Liszt's Transcendental Étude No. 1.

Both analyses have been quite prevailing in Western music theory and useful from analytical point of view. It is, however, important to note that the purpose of this research is not to define limitations of either methods, but merely to show how the Schenkerian and Neo-Riemannian theories can complement each other to generate a more accurate analytical reading of a work. The synthesis of Schenkerian and Neo-Riemannian theories is effective due to Liszt's interest in the dominant-tonic relations, as well as his fascination to explore a variety of closely-related harmonic regions that are not necessarily associated through Schenker's ideas. The integration of Schenkerian and Neo-Riemannian approaches generates a theoretical model that solves the significant analytical queries in harmony of the opening Transcendental étude.

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