

# A STUDY OF DONALD GRANTHAM'S *FANTASY VARIATIONS*: BROAD MUSICAL CONNECTIONS IN CORE THEORY CLASSES

AMY CARR-RICHARDSON

An ideal undergraduate core-theory curriculum not only equips students with basic analytical tools, but also encourages them to make musical connections by applying broad concepts (such as tonality, linear temporality, and the process of development) across a wide range of musical repertoire. Such connections are enabled when students encounter works that allow a pedagogical “preview” of topics to be introduced in later stages of the curriculum, and when instructors make these relationships explicit in later class sessions. These connections are also facilitated by studying works that are relevant to the students’ present-day experiences and their activities as performers. Such works can thus serve a transitional pedagogical purpose, helping young undergraduate students avoid potential conceptual gaps between relatively familiar tonal and linear (goal-directed) compositional styles, and relatively unfamiliar post-tonal and non-linear (discontinuous) styles. Carefully considering the choice of works to be discussed, and the timing of when to introduce a work, can enhance the students’ breadth of musical thought beyond the acquisition of a specific set of analytical skills and its localized application to a given piece. Of course, there is no substitute for experience in developing a broad musical perspective, which comes from playing, singing, and listening to a large quantity of music written in a variety of styles and time periods. However, decisions made by undergraduate theory teachers about content and presentation may help shape this breadth of musical awareness, while also ensuring the acquisition of relatively more concrete or specific analytical skills (for example, understanding harmonic functions in a tonal context, basic principles of set theory, formal analysis, etc.).

This article will offer analytical comments on Donald Grantham's *Fantasy Variations*, for wind ensemble, focusing on its pedagogical use in a core undergraduate theory class as a means of approaching the goals outlined above. Through its centric pitch organization, exploration of the diatonic and octatonic collections, and open-ended conclusion, Grantham's work can offer a transitional vantage point between the study of pitch in tonal and post-tonal contexts. Similarly, its rich array of developmental techniques can offer students an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the process of development, and to consider the concept of "developing variation" as discussed by Schoenberg. Of particular interest for pedagogical purposes is Grantham's borrowing process, which reconfigures linear aspects of Gershwin's music, and thus may enable a "preview" of the concept of nonlinearity that characterizes some twentieth- and twenty-first century music. Finally, in its explicit borrowing and "remaking" of a Gershwin source, *Fantasy Variations* invites a consideration of the broad topics of musical borrowing and compositional influence.



Grantham serves as Professor of Composition at the University of Texas and has received numerous awards, including the Prix Lili Boulanger Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a citation awarded by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. For *Fantasy Variations* (1998), he was awarded the 1999 American Bandmaster's Association ABA/Ostwald Award, and the 1999 National Bandmaster's Association NBA/William D. Revelli Composition Competition First Prize. A frequently performed work, it was commissioned by a consortium of universities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The consortium included the Univ. of Texas at Austin, the Univ. of Oklahoma, the Univ. of Nebraska, the Univ. of Illinois, the Univ. of Florida, and Michigan State Univ. For commentary on analysis and performance of the

*Fantasy Variations* is based on George Gershwin's Prelude II for Piano, "Blue Lullaby" (1926). Grantham's piece provides an effective example of the creative use of motivic development and is particularly interesting in its placement of complete thematic statements near the end of the work, preceded by development of the Prelude's motives. The work consists of an introduction, twenty variations, and a coda, each of which is labeled on the score by the composer. According to Grantham, the variations begin "with much more obscure fragments drawn from the introduction, accompanimental figures, transitions, cadences, and so forth." These are heard along with some of the Prelude's more distinctive motives in the first half of the work, and then these various elements of the Gershwin source gradually accumulate until the Prelude's two primary themes are presented completely in variations 18 and 19. Such a formal procedure may be described as a *cumulative setting*.

In his discussion of Charles Ives's procedures for using existing music, Peter Burkholder defines a cumulative setting as "a complex form in which the theme, either a borrowed tune or a melody paraphrased from one or more existing tunes, is presented complete only near the end of a movement, preceded by development of motives from the theme, fragmentary or altered presentation of the theme, and exposition of important countermelodies."<sup>2</sup> As Burkholder points out, a cumulative form is distinguished both by its continual development, which precedes a statement of the principal themes, and by its lack of repetition of long segments of music. The presentation of themes at the end represents the culmination of the continual development that is

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work, see Brian S. Taylor, "Fantasy Variations on George Gershwin's Prelude II for Piano: An Analysis and Conductor's Guide" (D.M.A. dissertation, Univ. of Southern Mississippi, 2008); and Kraig Alan Williams, "Donald Grantham's *Fantasy Variations*" (D.M.A. dissertation, Univ. of Texas at Austin, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing*, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 3–4. Also see Burkholder's previous discussions of cumulative setting in "'Quotation' and Emulation: Charles Ives's Use of His Models," *Musical Quarterly* 71/1 (1985): 1–26; and in *The Evolution of Charles Ives's Music: Aesthetics, Quotation, Technique* (Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Chicago, 1983).

heard throughout the movement, and thus serves as the goal of the form.<sup>3</sup>

A close parallel may be drawn between Ives's cumulative forms that are based on familiar, borrowed melodies, and Grantham's *Fantasy Variations*. For example, in the finale of Ives's Third Symphony, two distinct hymn tunes serve as the basis of the principal themes, which are stated in full and in counterpoint only at the end. Burkholder's description of a listener's experience of this cumulative form is apt for *Fantasy Variations*, as well as for other twentieth-century music that draws upon pre-existing works in a similar way:

A cumulative form like this may be compared to an extended gloss on a text, a ruminative, interpretive sermon on a verse of scripture that is stated in full only at the end. Such a setting explores and gradually clarifies the implications of the tune taken as its subject, as a sermon might explore the ramifications and clarify the ultimate meaning of a text. Part of the purpose of such scriptural exegesis in a gloss or sermon is to encourage a similar struggle with the meaning of the text on the part of the reader or listener, inviting a continuation of the process . . . . For a listener who does not know the text and has no particular memory of the hymn, the work can still be both comprehensible . . . and emotionally affecting . . . .<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of whether or not a listener is previously aware of the source material, part of the interest in cumulative form lies in the composer's decisions about which aspects of the original work to preserve or emphasize. The cumulative setting may even highlight aspects of the borrowed materials that a listener would not have noticed otherwise.<sup>5</sup>

#### PITCH ORGANIZATION

The Prelude's large-scale tonal motion, C# minor–F# major–C# minor, is reflected in the centric variations, which begin on C minor and conclude on F major. The variations employ the

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<sup>3</sup> Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 138.

<sup>4</sup> Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 148–149.

<sup>5</sup> Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 149.

octatonic collection in a manner that supports these pitch centers, such as through inversionally symmetrical voice-leading patterns that converge on a central pitch or triad. By ending on a different pitch center (F) than the one with which it began (C), Grantham's piece concludes in an open-ended manner, in a key that also alludes to that of Gershwin's bridge. Similarly, the last theme that receives a full statement in the variations' coda is the melody from the Prelude's bridge. The variations begin in C minor, a half step *below* the Prelude's original pitch level; but variations 6 and 7 are centered on G major, a half step *above* Gershwin's bridge, at a point during which motives from the bridge are being developed. In addition, variation 10, which develops the cadential figure from the Prelude's first section, is centered around D, a half step above the original statement of the motive. Thus, Grantham's choices about pitch organization "shadow" the tonal organization of his source, in that the beginning and ending pitch centers are a half step below the Prelude's main key areas, and other tonal contrast in the variations sounds a half step above the corresponding segments of Gershwin's work. The pitch structure also composes-out the minor-third motive broadly, just before the end of the work. Variations 19 and 20 present overt statements of the bridge theme, and a canon on the theme, while representing the Prelude's distinctive minor-third motive at the broadest level of pitch organization with pitch centers F–A<sup>b</sup>–F.

Motives from both of the Prelude's main sections consist primarily of octatonic subsets (see Figure 1). The Prelude's opening minor-third motive combines with its harmonic setting to create an octatonic subset repeatedly in mm. 5–8. Here, the jazz-influenced harmonic language of Gershwin ties into the octatonic collection, as the Prelude's augmented-ninth chords—members of set class (01469)—are also octatonic subsets. They sometimes sound in the Prelude as a chromatic neighboring motion that supports the melodic minor third (e.g., see Gershwin,

**FIGURE 1.**

(a) Octatonic subsets in Gershwin's motives

10

(01469)

31

(01469)

(b) Gershwin, Prelude II: mm. 4–8

5

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mm. 5–6). The chord includes both  $E\flat$  and  $E\sharp$ , with  $E\flat$  being enharmonically equivalent to  $D\sharp$ , the augmented-ninth interval above  $C\sharp$ .<sup>6</sup> The pitch collections of the first section's cadence (mm. 10–11) and of its motive from mm. 12–13 are also subsets of the octatonic 0,1 collection, although they sound in the Prelude's context of  $C\sharp$  minor. The opening motive of the  $F\sharp$  major bridge section (mm. 31–32) also forms set class (01469).

Joseph Straus has outlined two main areas of “middleground misreadings” of tonal works by twentieth-century composers: the transposition of referential collections to create harmonic areas, and the composing-out of motives.<sup>7</sup> Both of these strategies relate to *Fantasy Variations*. Grantham explores the relationship between the diatonic and octatonic collections by employing harmonies used by Gershwin that are common to both collections, such as the minor-seventh chord and the augmented-ninth chord (shown above, in Figure 1). The latter (which is equivalent to set class (01469)), plays an especially important role in unifying *Fantasy Variations* and in tying the work to Gershwin through its subsets (such as the minor-seventh chord (0358), and the “split-third” chord (0347)).

In variation 12 (m. 297*ff.*), octatonic melodic strands develop the minor-third and half-step intervals of the Prelude's cadence (m. 14) by adapting them into octatonic lines, by lengthening the cadential motive, and by using loose imitation between the upper winds (mm. 277–

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<sup>6</sup> The augmented-ninth chord is prominent in another work that may serve a transitional role in a core theory sequence: Berg's *Four Songs*, op. 2, incorporate this harmony as a referential “tonic.” Robert Gauldin includes this set of songs in his textbook, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music*, as a preparatory tool for post-tonal studies, pointing out both their tonal and post-tonal features. While these songs provide an excellent transition into post-tonal studies, for some undergraduate students, they are less familiar stylistically than Gershwin's or Grantham's music. See Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 754–771.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990), 169. Other relevant articles include Straus, “Atonal Composing-Out,” in *Order and Disorder: Music-Theoretical Strategies in 20th-Century Music*, Proceedings of the International Orpheus Academy for Music Theory 2003 (Leuven, Belgium: Univ. Press, 2004): 31–51; and Brian Alegant and Donald McLean, “On the Nature of Enlargement,” *Journal of Music Theory* 45/1 (2001): 31–71 (see especially part 3, which discusses extended tonal music).

**FIGURE 2.** Grantham, *Fantasy Variations*: large-scale statement of minor-third motive

The musical score for Figure 2 is presented in two systems. The first system, labeled 'D.G.', shows a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a 'CODA' marking. The first section, 'on F minor', starts at measure 392 and ends at measure 405. The second section, 'on A minor', starts at measure 394 and ends at measure 405. The second system, labeled 'Tpts.', shows a single staff with a trill starting at measure 405. The 'D.G.' label is also present on the left side of the second system.

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281). Grantham harmonizes these octatonic melodic ideas primarily with triads drawn from the same transpositional level of the octatonic collection. In mm. 279–281, Grantham composes-out the intervals of minor third and half-step by using consecutive triads related by  $T_3$  and  $T_{11}$ .

In addition to the large-scale composing-out of the minor-third motive with pitch centers in variations 19–20 (discussed above), a middleground instance of this motive sounds in the final measures of the variations, where there is planing on each pitch of an F-minor triad (F minor– $A\flat$  minor–F minor), and then on each pitch of an A-minor triad (A minor–C minor–A minor). Each of these motivic statements forms octatonic subset (01469); see Figure 2. (On the musical examples, Gershwin's music is marked "GG" and is always placed above the corresponding excerpts from Grantham, which are labeled "DG.") Grantham chooses A minor (rather than  $A\flat$  minor) for



the second large-scale statement of the motive. The motive's minor-third pattern is then altered and extended in preparation for the final cadence: in mm. 402–406, the trumpets play a descending series of major triads related by minor thirds, which symmetrically divide the octave and prolong F. Simultaneously, the trombones present a rising segment of the same series, beginning on A $\flat$ . The two harmonic progressions are given in contrary motion, converging on an A $\flat$ -major harmony in m. 404, and then expanding to the F-major chord that concludes the work.

Overall, a study of *Fantasy Variations* can preview aspects of pitch organization that might be addressed in the final semester of a core-theory curriculum. For example, a third-semester theory class might consider tonal works that are highly chromatic and lack tonal closure as a transitional topic that precedes the post-tonal studies of the following semester. Because Grantham's work is open-ended in its use of pitch centers, it can serve this pedagogical purpose. In its exploration of the relationship between the diatonic and octatonic collections, this piece provides an opportunity for students to begin examining post-tonal pitch language within a context that retains some familiarity.

#### DEVELOPMENTAL TECHNIQUES

Straus discusses various techniques by which twentieth-century composers “remake” earlier musical works. Even though his discussion is concerned primarily with relationships between early twentieth-century pieces and specific works from the Baroque and Classical eras, the process of “remaking” an earlier work is still applicable in the case of *Fantasy Variations*. Several of the techniques Straus describes are pertinent for Grantham's work, including motivicization (radically intensifying the motivic content of the original work), centralization (musical elements peripheral to the structure of an earlier work move to the structural center of a new

work), and motivic compression or expansion.<sup>8</sup> These developmental techniques are discussed below, ordered from the more concrete to the more abstract treatments of Gershwin's Prelude.

Grantham's variations open with a *motivization* of ideas from the Prelude, which is based on fragments of distinct motivic gestures from the latter part of Gershwin's bridge (Figure 3a). Some of the motives incorporated in this opening passage are based on fragments of the bridge melody (e.g., the first gesture of the variations and that of mm. 4–5 correspond with the grace notes and chromatic rising gesture of m. 39 in the Prelude); others are drawn from the harmonies that accompany the final melodic gesture of the bridge (e.g., Grantham, mm. 2–3, correspond to Gershwin, mm. 43–44; see Figure 3a). The melodic idea from the same measures (Gershwin, mm. 41 and 43) is then developed with a rhythmically additive process in Grantham, mm. 5–9, wherein the original rhythmic pattern is altered with the augmentation of a single rhythmic value (the second eighth note; see m. 5), then the augmentation of two rhythmic values (the second and third eighth notes; see m. 8).

Because this passage draws upon distinct fragments of the Prelude's bridge, it also embodies the developmental technique of *centralization*. Grantham's fragmentary and developmental treatments of these gestures in the opening measures are sufficiently subtle to prevent an immediate aural connection with the Prelude. There are brief, verbatim pitch-class correlations between the two works in their uses of the same motive, but Grantham weaves the motives into longer melodic strands and often changes them rhythmically, as shown in Figure 3a. The distinctive minor-third motive from Gershwin's opening melody emerges beginning in m. 11, at a pitch level a half step below its first statement in the Prelude. The fragment of this characteristic motive is easily comprehended by a listener, but given its brevity, one would not

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<sup>8</sup> Straus, *Remaking the Past*, 17.

FIGURE 3A. Motivic correlations between Gershwin, Prelude II, and Grantham, *Fantasy Variations*

The musical score for Figure 3A consists of four systems of music. The first system shows the Grand Grand (G.G.) piano part in measures 39-41 and the Donald Grantham (D.G.) part in measures 1-5. The D.G. part includes markings for 'C tpts.' and 'Oboe'. The second system shows G.G. piano part in measures 41-43 and D.G. part in measures 6-9. The third system shows G.G. piano part in measures 7-8. The fourth system shows D.G. part in measures 11-12, with a 'tpt.' marking. The key signature is F# major (three sharps) and the time signature is 4/4.

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necessarily associate it with Gershwin without foreknowledge that the two works are related. The remaining measures of Grantham's introduction develop this motive by inverting it, filling it in chromatically, and so forth.

Thus, by beginning his work with ending gestures (from the conclusion of Gershwin's bridge) and then proceeding on to the opening minor-third motive, Grantham treats the final measures of the original bridge as an introduction to the Prelude's first melody. Gershwin uses the chromatic rising motive to lead into the bridge's final cadence, but Grantham incorporates this borrowed motive as a marked beginning gesture at the opening of his work. Unlike Gershwin, Grantham does not make a clear formal point of division between the bridge and the primary melodic material, but instead combines the two and plays on their original temporal contexts. Through this reworking, the motives take on new musical meaning (compare Gershwin, m. 39, with Grantham, m. 1).

Like the opening passage shown in Figure 3a, portions of later variations also centralize motivic content that was peripheral in the Prelude. As shown in Figures 3b and 3c, variations 8 and 13 are also based on concluding motivic details from the bridge. In the first case, the last four eighth notes of the bridge (left hand, mm. 43–44) are used as the basis of a fugato (Grantham, mm. 143–151). When taken out of context and without reference, this motive is not sufficiently distinctive to be recognizable as part of the Prelude, yet Grantham elevates it to the status of a fugal subject. A different cadential detail from Gershwin's bridge (m. 40) serves as the gist of variation 13, where it is fragmented and then given in *stretto* at various pitch levels. Once again, Grantham not only exploits the Prelude's main melodic content, but also takes advantage of even the smallest detail in his source and reverses the temporal context of the motives (a cadential gesture becomes an opening gesture).

**FIGURE 3B.** Motivic correlations between Gershwin, Prelude II, and Grantham, *Fantasy Variations*

**FIGURE 3C.** [Same as above]

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Grantham also uses *motivic compression*, setting a condensed form of the minor-third motive with planing in the clarinet parts (see Figure 4, which illustrates the planing; the original motive from Gershwin was given in Figure 1). Six voices state the shortened motive simultaneously, and their pitch levels create a vertical hexachordal subset of the octatonic collection, (013679). Thus, both linear and horizontal compression occurs simultaneously.

**FIGURE 4.** Grantham, *Fantasy Variations*: use of motivic compression

(a)

93

(b)

(013679)

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In addition to composing-out the minor-third motive at the middleground and broader pitch-center levels, more abstract *expansions* occur, in which the original ideas from Gershwin are significantly transformed. These expansions also involve the centralization of cadential and transitional motives from the Prelude. Grantham's variation technique includes preserving important aspects of a borrowed idea, while changing its setting sufficiently to create the effect of not just another variation, but a truly "new" idea (see Figure 5). Variation 6 begins with a lyrical melodic statement in the flute (m. 100) that generally summarizes Gershwin's bridge;

**FIGURE 5.** Grantham, *Fantasy Variations*, var. 6: use of motivic transformation

The figure displays two musical staves. The upper staff, labeled 'G.G.', is in 4/4 time and begins at measure 31. It features a melodic line with several notes grouped by brackets (measures 31-34) and some notes enclosed in parentheses (measures 34, 104, 113). The lower staff, labeled 'D.G.', is in 2/4 time and begins at measure 101. It also shows a melodic line with brackets (measures 101-104), parentheses (measures 104, 113), and arrows pointing to specific notes (measures 35, 105, 113). The key signature for both staves is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

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however, Grantham's use of straight rhythmic patterns and elongated durations for some pitches makes the borrowing quite subtle. The labels on Figure 5 illustrate the close melodic ties between Gershwin's bridge and Grantham's sixth variation: brackets indicate corresponding motives, parentheses enclose neighboring motives, and arrows indicate descending melodic thirds.

The horn melody in the following waltz (variation 7) is shown in Figure 6. It is even further removed from the original Gershwin melody, although its opening seven measures generally preserve the interval content and contour of the original (here stated in G major, transposed a half step above its original occurrence in the Prelude's mm. 31–34). Changes in its meter, rhythm, and contrapuntal setting transform Gershwin's line into a new melody, despite the

FIGURE 6. Grantham, *Fantasy Variations*, var. 7: use of motivic transformation

31

G.G.

Var. 7 118  
Hn.

D.G.

(sequence)

35 35 37

G.G.

126 Fl./Cl.

D.G.

Hn. Cl. Hn.

Tuba Bass Cl. Euph.

38

G.G.

132 Fl.

D.G.

(CONTINUED)



**Figure 6.** (continued)

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general maintenance of substantial aspects of its identity (i.e., melodic intervals and contour).

This strikingly “new” treatment of one of Gershwin’s themes offers an interesting example of the rich possibilities of development created by *abstract motivic relationships*, regardless of a work’s pitch language or musical style. Hans Keller described this phenomenon when he wrote about the essential trait of development, or what he called “the artistic logic of inconsistency.” He claimed that “development without contrast, without what, on the surface, seems inconsistent, unforeshadowable, is no development.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Hans Keller, “Schoenberg: The Future of Symphonic Thought,” *Perspectives of New Music* 13/1 (1974): 3–20; reprinted in *Hans Keller on Music: Selected Essays*, ed. Christopher Wintle with Bayan Northcott and Irene Samuel (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994): 179–191. Quotation from the reprint, 182.

The remainder of variation 7 continues to develop gestures from the later portions of Gershwin's bridge, but they are reworked in novel ways and distributed among different instruments. The distinctive triplet sounding in the last half of m. 36 is represented by Grantham as three straight quarter notes in m. 129, and this original triplet figure might have provided an impetus for the inclusion of a waltz variation. The melodic material of the Prelude's mm. 38–40 is altered by replacing some prominent eighth notes with dotted quarter notes in mm. 132 and 136–137. This creates a humorous hesitating effect when compared with the original melody. The transitional melodic material that concludes the bridge (mm. 43–44 of the Prelude, left hand) is given with increasing rhythmic augmentation in Grantham's mm. 138–142: the borrowed eighth-note motive begins as quarter notes (m. 138) but then continues with half-note values (mm. 139–140) and ends with a whole-note duration on the penultimate pitch of Gershwin's transition (mm. 141–142). The final melodic pitch and last two chords of Gershwin's transition are also omitted, with rests following the penultimate pitch.

Thus, the conclusion of variation 7 would remain open-ended and the harmony unresolved, except that the opening gesture of subsequent variation 8 provides a delayed resolution to G, with a different developmental treatment of the same transitional motive (the final four pitches of Gershwin's bridge), now in C minor. Therefore, a brief overlap is formed between variations 7 and 8 (i.e., m. 143 through the downbeat of m. 144) in terms of pitch content, although the motivic statements consist of distinctive rhythmic and metric treatments of the same motive from Gershwin (F<sup>#</sup>–G–A<sup>(b)</sup>–G), which are separated by silence and changes of key and mode. These changes become apparent to the listener only in retrospect, after hearing m. 144. This is an especially interesting passage, in that the sharing of a single point (beat) or pitch between distinct sections of a work is much more common than shared events spanning a full

motive. While terms for such events are not completely standardized, the former (a single common point) may be described as an “elision,” and the latter (a shared span that exceeds the length of a single point or beat) may be regarded as an “overlap.”

### RECOMPOSITIONS

Students could be directed to compare the use of motivic development by Grantham with selected passages by composers such as Beethoven, Brahms, and Schoenberg (using general, descriptive language for Schoenberg, before they have a working knowledge of set theory). Even though Schoenberg's discussion of developing variation in the music of Brahms is not related to theme-and-variation movements, but rather to developmental technique broadly, the specific compositional techniques associated with developing variation relate to Grantham's work. For example, Brahms's use of a linkage technique in which a concluding motive is immediately reinterpreted as a new phrase beginning finds a general parallel in Grantham's developmental technique discussed above (see Figure 6 for one such instance).<sup>10</sup>

Some of Schoenberg's early twentieth-century post-tonal works consist of recompositions of earlier tonal works written by other composers. As Joseph Straus explains, Schoenberg enriches the motivic structure of the original music and reinterprets an older tonal work as a “network of motivic association.”<sup>11</sup> The process of reworking involves a “motivic saturation” in the new composition, which is achieved through instrumentation, register transfer, articulation,

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<sup>10</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “Brahms the Progressive [1947]” and “New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea [1946],” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 398–441 and 113–124 (respectively); and Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), 14–18. I am not suggesting that linkage technique is directly associated with Schoenberg's idea of developing variation, but rather citing these passages as general examples of developmental process.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph N. Straus, “Recompositions by Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Webern,” *Musical Quarterly* 72/3 (1986): 301–328.

and, at times, by adding melodic content.<sup>12</sup> Grantham's borrowing procedures are similar to those Straus describes, in that passages of the variations are saturated with the borrowed motives, and they enrich the original motivic relationships by exploiting them fully in an abstract manner. Although Grantham is obviously not concerned with advocating a motivic compositional method *per se*, parallels may be observed between his motivic borrowing and developmental procedures and those of Schoenberg, thus preparing students for the study of early atonal music by providing a frame of reference.

Because the concluding thematic statements of *Fantasy Variations* provide the culmination of the work's development, the overall form is goal-oriented. The variations thus preserve traditional linearity, in which events are understood as outgrowths or consequences of earlier events.<sup>13</sup> However, the borrowing process extracts motives from their original temporal contexts and even reverses their original settings (a cadence from Gershwin's piece becomes a marked beginning in Grantham's work). The borrowing process also highlights transitional figures that are not strongly marked by their original temporal context. Thus, in its borrowing, Grantham's work seems purposefully to disrupt and reconfigure the linearity of its source. This aspect of the piece can lead to an introduction of the concept of non-linearity in some post-tonal music (for example, musical works categorized as non-linear "moment forms," which are characterized by relatively independent, self-contained sections that are distinguished by discontinuities). The term "moment form" was used by Stockhausen and is often associated with his music, but the concept of a form that lacks a linear, goal-oriented process (such as development toward a climactic point) and is comprised instead of static blocks of music has been applied to antece-

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<sup>12</sup> Straus, "Recompositions," 310.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer, 1988), 20 and 453.

dents of “pure” moment form in works by various composers, such as Stravinsky and Messiaen. For example, Jonathan Kramer discusses the evolution toward moment form in works by Debussy, Webern, Varese, and Stravinsky.<sup>14</sup> If moment forms consist of a “mosaic of discrete sections” that are related in some non-linear way, Grantham’s work provides a general parallel to that formal process with the variations’ mosaic-like borrowing of small fragments and disruption of their original linear setting in the Prelude. Studying the variations can thus preview the concepts of non-linearity and collage technique embodied in many twentieth-century works, even if some of those works are written in a very different style and pitch language from works composed by either Grantham or Gershwin.

As listeners, undergraduate students typically find both Gershwin’s Prelude and Grantham’s variations accessible. The piece by Grantham is also an attractive choice for pedagogical purposes because it is a recent work and invites an investigation of music written by two American composers. Furthermore, wind-ensemble literature is often excluded from standard anthologies published for use in core theory curricula. This situation limits the students’ experiences; for example, if an instructor uses only works found in standard anthologies, students who play saxophone may never study a work that includes their instrument in the entire undergraduate core theory curriculum. Of course, an instructor can deal with the anthology’s limitations by making a complete score accessible (e.g., placing it on reserve in the library), by giving listening assignments even before any score study occurs, and by making relevant score excerpts available to each student. From the standpoint of musical style, the variations also offer an attractive choice for an undergraduate classroom. Because Grantham sets the fragments from

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<sup>14</sup> Kramer, *The Time of Music*, 201–220.

Gershwin in ways that exploit every possible musical character inherent in the Prelude—as a scherzo, a lyrical waltz, blues, swing, etc.—the work provides a survey of stylistic traits, especially those associated with American popular music from the early twentieth century. The wide variety of styles represented in Grantham's work recalls Straus's comments on the experience of hearing a "recomposition":

In recomposition, a composer takes a familiar object from the shared world of our inherited musical culture and, by altering it and presenting it in a new context, forces us to hear it in a new way. In the process, the composer attacks our normal, customary ways of approaching these familiar objects.<sup>15</sup>

Because of its exploration of the relationship between tonal and octatonic pitch organization, analyzing Grantham's work offers students a transitional vantage point for beginning the study of pitch structure in post-tonal styles. Likewise, students may gain an enriched view of the concepts of development and linear temporality by studying the subtle motivic relationships and the organic—although not necessarily linear—relation between the Prelude and the variations, as created by Grantham's "collage" type of borrowing technique. This experience could easily enhance students' approaches to considering pitch organization and motivic development in other works of the twentieth century, regardless of the style in which they were composed.

In sum, Donald Grantham's *Fantasy Variations* offers an interesting example of a work that may be used to broaden students' awareness and perspectives on the musical concepts of tonality, development, and linear temporality, and to "preview" important topics within these broad categories before they are encountered in an undergraduate core-theory sequence. Encouraging students to develop a sensitivity toward these basic concepts, while they also master the

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<sup>15</sup> Straus, "Recompositions," 327.

skills of describing the analytical details of a given work, will contribute to their musicianship in the broadest sense—a worthy goal for any undergraduate theory class.

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## ABSTRACT

This article contains analytical comments on Donald Grantham's *Fantasy Variations*, which is based on George Gershwin's Prelude II ("Blue Lullaby"), focusing on its pedagogical use in a core undergraduate theory class. It proposes encouraging students to make broad musical connections regarding tonality, temporality, and developmental process, across a wide range of musical repertoire. The article discusses the analysis of *Fantasy Variations* in relation to these topics: pedagogical transitions between the study of tonal and post-tonal music, the process of development, non-linear aspects of twentieth- and twenty-first century music, and musical borrowing.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Carr-Richardson teaches at East Carolina University. In addition to music theory pedagogy, her interests include the study of Beethoven's late music.

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