

CHAPTER 7

Texture and Textural Reduction

TOPICS

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Harmonic Support (HS)
Rhythmic Support (RS)
Textural Reduction

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

The sound of music is the direct result of the instruments and voices the composer employs and the way they are combined. Instruments and voices are like primary colors blended together to create the many hues that give music its beautiful surface. Although a detailed study of the characteristics and properties of instruments goes beyond the scope of this book, it is important for you to understand certain fundamental facts about sound and texture.

Texture

The term *texture* refers to the way the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic materials are woven together in a composition. It is a general term that is often used rather loosely to describe the vertical aspects of music. Since changes of texture often mark formal divisions in music and textural matters often complicate harmonic analysis, it is important that we deal with texture in a more specific way. Texture is often described in terms of density and range. Although these are good descriptive terms, they are less useful analytically than the more precise description of texture types that you will learn in this chapter.

Density

The *density* of texture is often described as “thick,” consisting of many voices or parts, and “thin,” consisting of few voices. An example of thin texture is shown in Figure 7.1, and you will find an example of thick texture in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.1

Haydn: Sonata in G Major, Hob. XVI:11, III, mm. 25–29.

The musical score for Figure 7.1 is in G major, 3/4 time. It consists of five measures. The right hand (treble clef) has a melodic line: measure 25 starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G, and a triplet of eighth notes (A, B, C); measure 26 has a quarter note D, followed by two quarter rests; measure 27 has a quarter note G, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (A, B, C); measure 28 has a quarter note D, followed by two quarter rests; measure 29 has a quarter rest. The left hand (bass clef) provides harmonic support: measure 25 has a quarter note G, followed by two quarter rests; measure 26 has a quarter rest, followed by two chords (D2-F2 and G2-B2); measure 27 has a quarter rest, followed by two quarter notes (G2 and A2); measure 28 has a quarter rest, followed by two chords (D2-F2 and G2-B2); measure 29 has a quarter rest, followed by a chord (D2-F2).

Figure 7.2

Billy Taylor: *Taylor Made Piano*, p. 158, Example B.

A musical score for piano in 4/4 time, featuring a wide range of chords. The score consists of two staves, treble and bass clef. The music is characterized by dense, block-like chords with a wide interval between the lowest and highest notes, creating a rich, textured sound. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat).

Range

The *range* of a texture is often described as “wide” or “narrow,” depending on the interval between the lowest and highest tones. Wide range is shown in Figure 7.3. Narrow range is shown in Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.3

Berlioz: *Agnus Dei* from *Grande messe des morts* (Requiem), op. 5, no. 10, mm. 69–76.

A musical score for voice and piano in 3/4 time. The top two staves are for the voice, with lyrics: "re - qui - em sem - pi - ter - nam." The bottom two staves are for the piano accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano). The piano part features a wide range of chords and melodic lines, with a prominent *ff* marking in the first measure and *p* markings in the second and third measures.

Figure 7.4

Elliott Carter: *Eight Etudes and a Fantasy for Woodwind Quartet*, III, mm. 1–4.

A musical score for woodwind quartet in 4/4 time, marked *Adagio possibile*. The score is for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The tempo is *Adagio possibile*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano). The music is characterized by a narrow range of notes, with a focus on intricate rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

Texture Types

Although density and range are usually described in relative terms, the description of texture type is much more precise. A number of texture types occur from time to time, but the most common are monophonic, polyphonic, homophonic, and homorhythmic.

Monophonic Texture

Monophonic texture is the simplest texture type in music, consisting of a single melodic line, as shown in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5

Sequence: “Dies Irae.”

Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la, Sol - vet saec - lum in fa - vil - la:

Monophonic textures can be expanded by doubling in octaves or at other intervals. Octave doubling occurs in Figure 7.6, and doubling at other intervals, also called parallelism, is shown in Figure 7.7.

Figure 7.6

Sousa: *Washington Post March*, mm. 1–5.

ff

Figure 7.7

Debussy: *Sarabande* from *Pour le Piano* (For the Piano), mm. 1–2.

Avec une élégance grave et lente

p

Polyphonic Texture

Polyphonic textures consist of two or more lines moving independently or in imitation with each other. Figure 7.8 shows two independent lines. Figure 7.9 shows two lines in imitation.

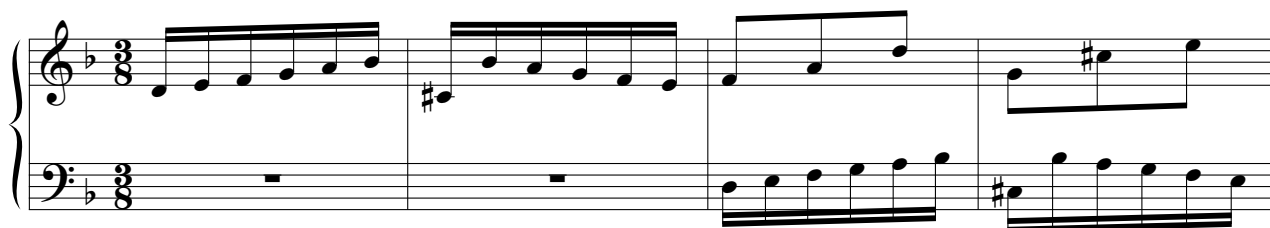
Figure 7.8

Bach: Invention no. 5 in E-flat Major, BWV 776, mm. 1–2.



Figure 7.9

Bach: Invention no. 4 in D Minor, BWV 775, mm. 1–4.



The various lines may be similar or contrasting in character. Lines with similar rhythmic values and contour appear in Figure 7.10. Lines with contrasting rhythmic values and contour appear in Figure 7.11.

Figure 7.10

Josquin des Prez: *Tu Solus Qui Facis Mirabilia* (You Alone Perform Such Wonders), mm. 35–38.

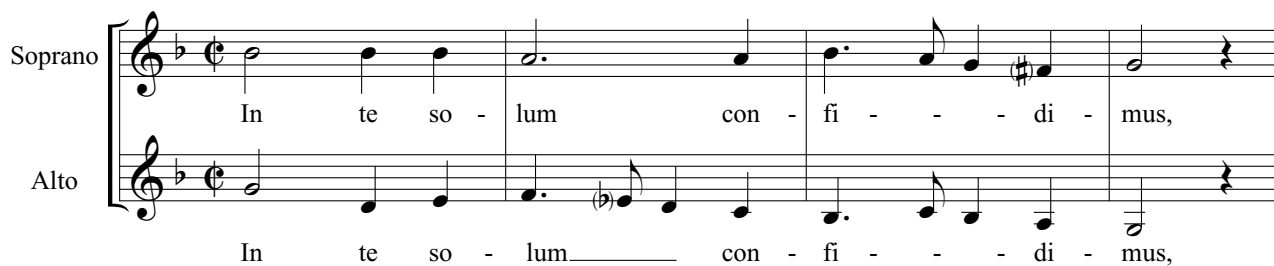


Figure 7.11

Bach: *Fuga Canonica* from *The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079, mm. 1–3.

Homophonic Texture

The most common texture in Western music is *homophonic texture*, which is made up of a melody and an accompaniment. The accompaniment provides rhythmic and harmonic support for the melody.

Figure 7.12

Mendelssohn: *Songs Without Words* op. 30, no. 6, mm. 7–10.

The rhythmic and harmonic supporting functions may be combined in the same material, or separate parts may be assigned to each function. Rhythmic and harmonic support are combined in Figure 7.13. Separate harmonic support is shown in Figure 7.14.

Figure 7.13

Schumann: “Ich Grolle Nicht” (“I Bear No Grudge”) from *Dichterliebe*, op. 48, no. 7, mm. 1–4.

Figure 7.14

Mozart: Symphony no. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, I: Molto Allegro, mm. 221–225.

The musical score for Figure 7.14 consists of four staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and features a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with various note values and rests. The second staff is labeled 'Harmonic Support' and also uses a treble clef, providing a chordal accompaniment. The third staff is labeled 'Harmonic and Rhythmic Support' and uses a treble clef, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The bottom staff is also labeled 'Harmonic and Rhythmic Support' and uses a bass clef, providing a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes.

Homorhythmic Texture

Homorhythmic texture is a texture with similar rhythmic material in all parts. This texture is often referred to as “hymn style,” “chordal homophony,” or “chordal texture,” depending on the presence or absence of melodic material (Figure 7.15).

Figure 7.15

Owens: “Freely, Freely,” mm. 26–32.

The musical score for Figure 7.15 is a piano accompaniment in 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The music consists of a series of chords and single notes, all sharing the same rhythmic pattern, which is characteristic of homorhythmic texture.

History

During each period in the history of music, composers employed distinctive textural features. We can generally state that a distinguishing texture type predominates each era.

The characteristic texture type of the Renaissance period is polyphonic texture. Since harmony was largely described in terms of the relationship of voices, it is natural that a texture of multiple voices would be the result. Renaissance composers placed great value on the independence of lines, although they used imitation at the beginning of most phrases. The textures were of moderate range and seldom very dense (see Josquin des Prez: *Tu Solus Qui Facis Mirabilia*, page 148).

The rise of the figured-bass concept, which is basically an accompaniment technique, signaled the beginning of interest in homophonic texture in the baroque period. Both poly-

phonic and homophonic textures were used, but seldom in the same composition or movement. Textures in the baroque period were generally denser than those of the Renaissance period, and the rise of instrumental music allowed for wider ranges (see Bach: Invention no. 4 and Invention no. 5, page 148).

During the classical period, homophony became the standard texture, and composers engaged in much greater contrast of range and density than in the baroque period (see Mozart: Symphony in G minor, page 150).

The romantic period maintained the predominance of homophonic texture, but with increased range and density (see Schumann: “Ich grolle nicht” from *Dichterliebe*, page 149). Textures in the romantic period became more complex and often shifted suddenly for emotional effect (see Berlioz: “Agnus Dei,” from *Grande messe des morts*, page 146).

Composers of the post-romantic period generally maintained the textures that the romantic period composers used, but with the impressionists, texture took on new significance. Many impressionist works depended heavily on texture for their effect (see Debussy: Sarabande from *Pour le Piano*, page 147). Typical texture types of the impressionistic period are expanded monophonic texture (parallelism) and homophonic texture.

In the twentieth century, no “typical” texture type has prevailed. Constant texture change characterizes many styles. Composers who choose to imitate the styles of previous periods (in neoclassicism, for example) typically imitate the textures as well. In other styles, the fabric of music explodes into small fragments and textural continuity breaks down.

Popular music is nearly all homophonic texture. Much of jazz is also homophonic (see Billy Taylor: *Taylor Made Piano*, page 146). However, the simultaneous improvisations of some jazz musicians creates true polyphony, with considerable independence of line.

APPLICATIONS

You can use both aural and visual assessments to identify texture types. The analysis and reduction of individual elements provide the means for evaluating textures accurately.

Analysis of Texture

The analysis of texture involves a process of recognizing and labeling the primary elements of the texture, as well as the identification of texture type. The textural elements are primary melody (PM), secondary melody (SM), parallel supporting melody (PSM), static support (SS), harmonic support (HS), rhythmic support (RS), and harmonic and rhythmic support (HRS).

Primary Melody (PM)

Primary melodies (PM) are the most important lines in a musical texture. In homophonic textures, there is usually only one primary melody (Figure 7.16), but in polyphonic textures, where the lines are of equal importance, there may be several primary melodies (Figure 7.17).

Figure 7.16

Mendelssohn: *Songs Without Words* op. 30, no. 6, mm. 7–10.

Figure 7.17

Mozart: *Recordare* from Requiem in D Minor, K. 626, mm. 54–57.

The image shows a musical score for two voices: Soprano and Tenor. The key signature is D minor (one flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The Soprano part has a box labeled 'PM' above the first measure. The lyrics for the Soprano are: Ju - ste ju - dex ul - ti - o - nis, . The Tenor part has a box labeled 'PM' below the first measure. The lyrics for the Tenor are: Ju - ste ju - dex ul - ti - o - nis, do .

Although the primary melody frequently occurs as the highest part in a composition, it can reside in other positions. The primary melody in Figure 7.18 appears as the lowest-sounding voice.

Figure 7.18

Chopin: Prelude no. 6 in B Minor, op. 28, mm. 1–4.

The image shows a piano score for Chopin's Prelude no. 6 in B Minor, op. 28, mm. 1–4. The tempo is marked 'Lento assai' and the dynamics are 'sotto voce'. The key signature is B minor (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. A box labeled 'PM' is placed below the first measure of the bass line, indicating the primary melody.

Secondary Melody (SM)

Other melodic lines that are not equal in significance to the primary melody are called *secondary melodies (SM)*.

Figure 7.19

Bach: *Fuga Canonica* from *The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079, mm. 1–3.

The image shows a piano score for Bach's Fuga Canonica from The Musical Offering, BWV 1079, mm. 1–3. The key signature is D minor (one flat) and the time signature is common time (C). A box labeled 'PM' is placed above the first measure of the treble line, and a box labeled 'SM' is placed above the first measure of the bass line.

The process of deciding whether a melody is primary or secondary requires musical judgment, and there are differences of opinion. Performers indicate their understanding of the relative importance of melodies by how they choose to balance the parts or by the lines they choose to bring out. Thus the decision about primary and secondary melody is crucial to music interpretation.

Parallel Supporting Melody (PSM)

Parallel supporting melodies (PSM) are melodies that are similar in contour to a primary melody (Figure 7.20) or secondary melody (Figure 7.21). They often maintain a constant interval relationship with the melody they support.

Figure 7.20

Debussy: Sarabande from *Pour le Piano* (For the Piano), mm. 1–2.

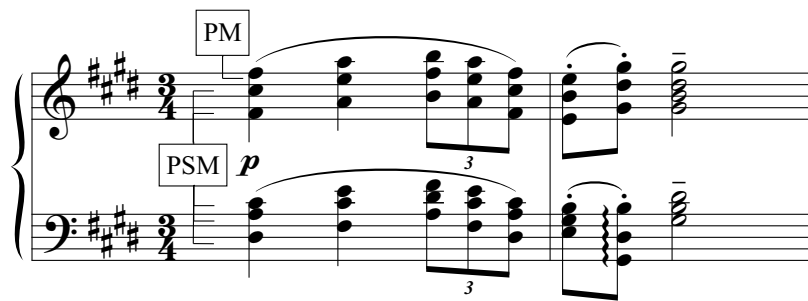


Figure 7.21

Bach: Chorale Prelude on “Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag” from *Orgelbüchlein*, BWV 629, mm. 1–4.



Static Support (SS)

Static supporting (SS) parts are of two types: (1) sustained tones or chords, which are often pedal tones (Figure 7.22), and (2) repeated melodic and rhythmic figures or ostinati (Figure 7.23).

Figure 7.22

Bach: Fugue no. 2 in C Minor from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, BWV 847, mm. 29–31.

The musical score for Figure 7.22 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has three flats (C minor) and the time signature is common time (C). The score includes several annotations: 'PM' (Piano Motion) is labeled above the first measure of both staves and above the second measure of the upper staff. 'SM' (Structural Motion) is labeled above the third measure of the upper staff. 'SS' (Structural Support) is labeled below the first measure of the lower staff. A large slur spans across the bottom of the lower staff, encompassing the first three measures.

Figure 7.23

Borodin: *Serenade* from *Petite Suite*, mm. 7–10.

The musical score for Figure 7.23 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in bass clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has three flats (C minor) and the time signature is 6/8. The score includes several annotations: 'PM' (Piano Motion) is labeled above the first measure of the upper staff. 'HRS' (Harmonic and Rhythmic Support) is labeled above the first measure of the lower staff. The instruction *p amoro ed espressivo il canto* is written above the first measure of the lower staff. 'SS' (Structural Support) is labeled below the first measure of the lower staff. The upper staff features a melodic line with accents and slurs, while the lower staff features a rhythmic accompaniment of chords.

Harmonic and Rhythmic Support (HRS)

As we discussed in the definition of homophonic texture, harmonic and rhythmic elements are often combined in the same textural elements. Such elements are labeled as *harmonic and rhythmic support (HRS)*. If these support functions are separated, they are labeled as *harmonic support (HS)* or *rhythmic support (RS)* as follows.

Figure 7.24

Mendelssohn: *Songs Without Words* op. 30, no. 6, mm. 7–10.

The musical score for Figure 7.24 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has three sharps (F# major) and the time signature is 6/8. The score includes several annotations: 'PM' (Piano Motion) is labeled above the first measure of the upper staff. The instruction *p cantabile* is written above the first measure of the upper staff. 'HRS' (Harmonic and Rhythmic Support) is labeled below the first measure of the lower staff. The upper staff features a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the lower staff features a rhythmic accompaniment of chords.

Figure 7.25

Mozart: Symphony no. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, I: Molto Allegro, mm. 221–225.

The image shows a musical score for Mozart's Symphony no. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, I: Molto Allegro, mm. 221–225. The score consists of four staves. The top staff is the melody, annotated with 'PM'. The second staff is the harmonic support, annotated with 'HS'. The third and fourth staves are the rhythmic support, both annotated with 'HRS'. The key signature is G minor (two flats) and the time signature is common time (C). The music is in a 4/4 time signature.

Textural Reduction

When harmonic and rhythmic support functions are combined, it is often difficult to gain a clear understanding of the harmony. However, you can resolve the problem by removing the rhythmic materials from the texture and writing the result as block chords. The following example has been reduced to clarify the harmony and embedded voice leading (see Chapter 9).

Figure 7.26

Bach: Prelude no. 1 in C Major from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, BWV 846, mm. 1–2.

The image shows a musical score for Bach's Prelude no. 1 in C Major from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, BWV 846, mm. 1–2. The score is divided into two parts. The top part shows the original notation for two staves (treble and bass clef) in common time (C). The bottom part shows a textural reduction of the same two staves, where the rhythmic material has been removed and replaced by block chords. The key signature is C major and the time signature is common time (C). Below the textural reduction, the chords are labeled as C: I and ii₂⁴.

With practice you will be able to see the chords in accompaniment textures without writing reductions, but this skill can be developed and improved by practice in writing

block chords. To write a reduction, first determine the duration of each chord by playing or listening to the example in Figure 7.27. Since nonharmonic tones may appear within accompaniment figures, you will need to be alert for tones that do not seem to be part of the surrounding harmony.

Figure 7.27

Chopin: Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, op. post., mm. 9–12.

Nonharmonic tones (circled):

Duration of chords:

Now write the pitches of the chords in the order they appear using note values to show the duration of each chord. Maintain the original register of the chord pitches even though the rhythmic elements may have changed to reflect the harmonic rhythm.

Figure 7.28

Chopin: Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, op. post., mm. 9–12.

Chords: