

What Does Music Mean?

Introduction to Unit 2

Introduction

How do we evaluate meaning?

Meaning

- Philosophical Questions

- What are the arts?

- Sociological

What is its place in our shared history and its cultural significance?

- Psychological: How is meaning transferred?

- Cognitive
 - Linguistics
 - Semiotics

Part I

Philosophical Questions

Aesthetic Issues:

Metaphor,
representation,
or
just
a
bad
imitation.



Ancient Philosophy

■ Plato

- Beauty can be found in form or ideas has qualities of being “good”
 - But what is good is not necessarily beautiful, they share qualities but are not dependent on each other.
 - However, beauty is something in itself, bound to the form
 - Our appreciation of what is good is usually separate from the object itself.

Plato on the arts: A love/hate relationship?

- Imitation and emulation-the arts are often a copy or imitation of something real.
 - A painting depicts nature or people
 - A book depicts life situations
 - A poet describes life and love
 - A play imitates life situations

Plato's issues with the arts— mostly poets and actors

- It is fraud—it is not real
- Impersonation: Poetry and acting are bad because they accentuate fraud to manipulate people.
- It is a copy far below the original
 - But what is music and what does it imitate?

So what's good about it?

- The arts are enjoyable and convey beauty
- In the right hands, it can positively influence people
- People are best to learn how to judge good and bad tones
- Be on guard of how it can be used to manipulate
 - Commercials, political movements, movies?

Romantic

■ Kant

- Beauty is basically in the eye of the beholder
 - Hierarchal concepts that predate Schenker

■ Schopenhauer

- Extension of the will
- Music stands alone because is not an imitation
- It is a copy of an original that cannot be directly displayed

Schopenhauer

- Music is a copy of the whole world and will in itself
- Others relay shadows while music conveys essence
- Metaphor:
 - Bass is the world and underlying structure.
 - Scales are the gradients of wills' objectification
 - Melody are the animals that play upon the harmony

Modern concepts

- Derrida-Deconstructionism
- Alfred North Whitehead-Process
- Sartre-Existentialism
- Adorno

Basic Ontology—the nature of being

■ Realism

- “Theory of the reality of abstract or general terms, or universals, which are held to have an equal and sometimes a superior reality to actual physical particulars. Universals exist before things, *ante res*. Opposed to *nominalism* (q.v.) according to which universals have a being only after things

Idealism (Ontology)

- Any system or doctrine whose fundamental interpretative principle is ideal. Broadly, any theoretical or practical view emphasizing mind (soul, spirit, life) or what is characteristically of pre-eminent value or significance to it. Negatively, the alternative to Materialism.

Idealism and Music

- Idealist: Music is a mental entity or imaginary object (Collingwood and Sartre)
 - Problem: Focus is less on music than on phenomenology
 - Negates the performance medium (such as live versus recorded)

Ontology

- Nominalist and Music
 - Vaguely considers collections of scores as representative of a set of performances
 - Problem: performances aren't perfect

Nominalism (Ontology)

- **NOMINALISM.** From the Latin term *nomen* meaning “name.” Nominalism represents the minimal position with respect to the problem of Universals (*q.v.*). The position is that universals are not real entities either in the world or in the mind, but names which refer to groups or classes of individual things. (W.L. Reese, 1980)

Action theory: The Genius Concept

- Action theory: Art is the result of the actions of the composer
 - A set of “types” of actions rather than “particular” actions (David Davies)

Platonist View (like action theory and nominalism)

- Musical works are abstract objects that are the result of human action

Ontology of performance

- Formalists: The music itself contains the answers within its form and structures
- Contextualists: The value of artistic and historical performance

Part II

Sociological Aspects of Meaning

Culture and history

- Music reflects culture

- Where is music used?
 - Weddings, concerts, rituals, etc..

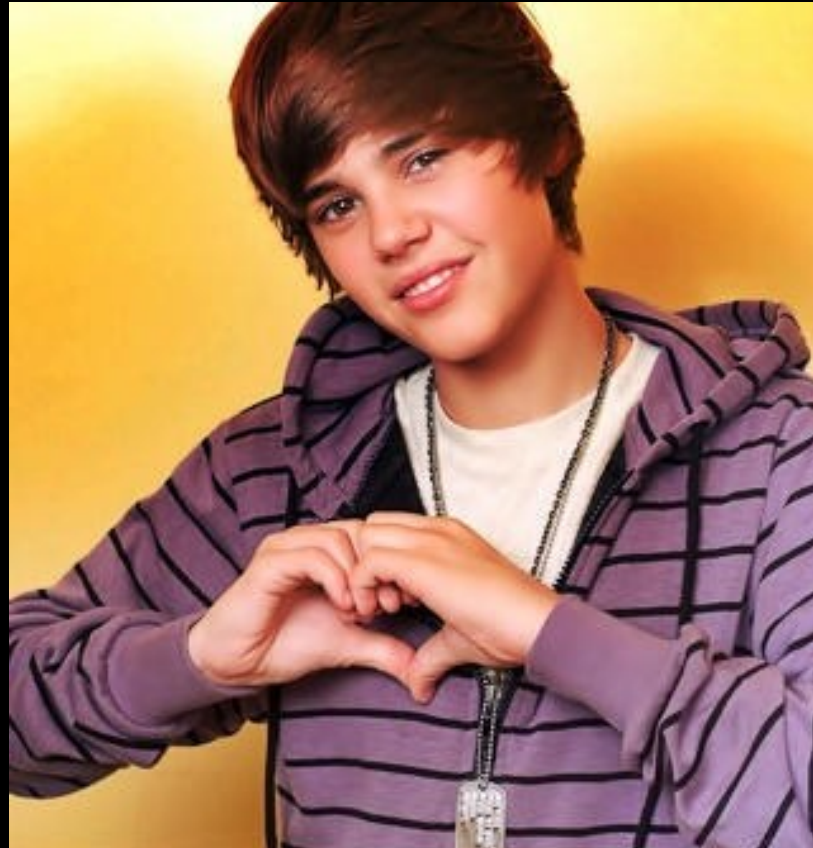
- Reflects history

- How the music develops and changes with our social thought
 - Philosophy, ethics
 - Changing or static cultural values

Adorno

- Social and musical meanings are not the same
 - Meanings can be “socially perverted”
 - Musical meaning can be manufactured and sold as a commodity
 - Can be used to exert dominance over the masses though music is free of social ideology
 - Therefore, we must separate social function from social legitimacy

Why does Adorno have no love for Justin Bieber?



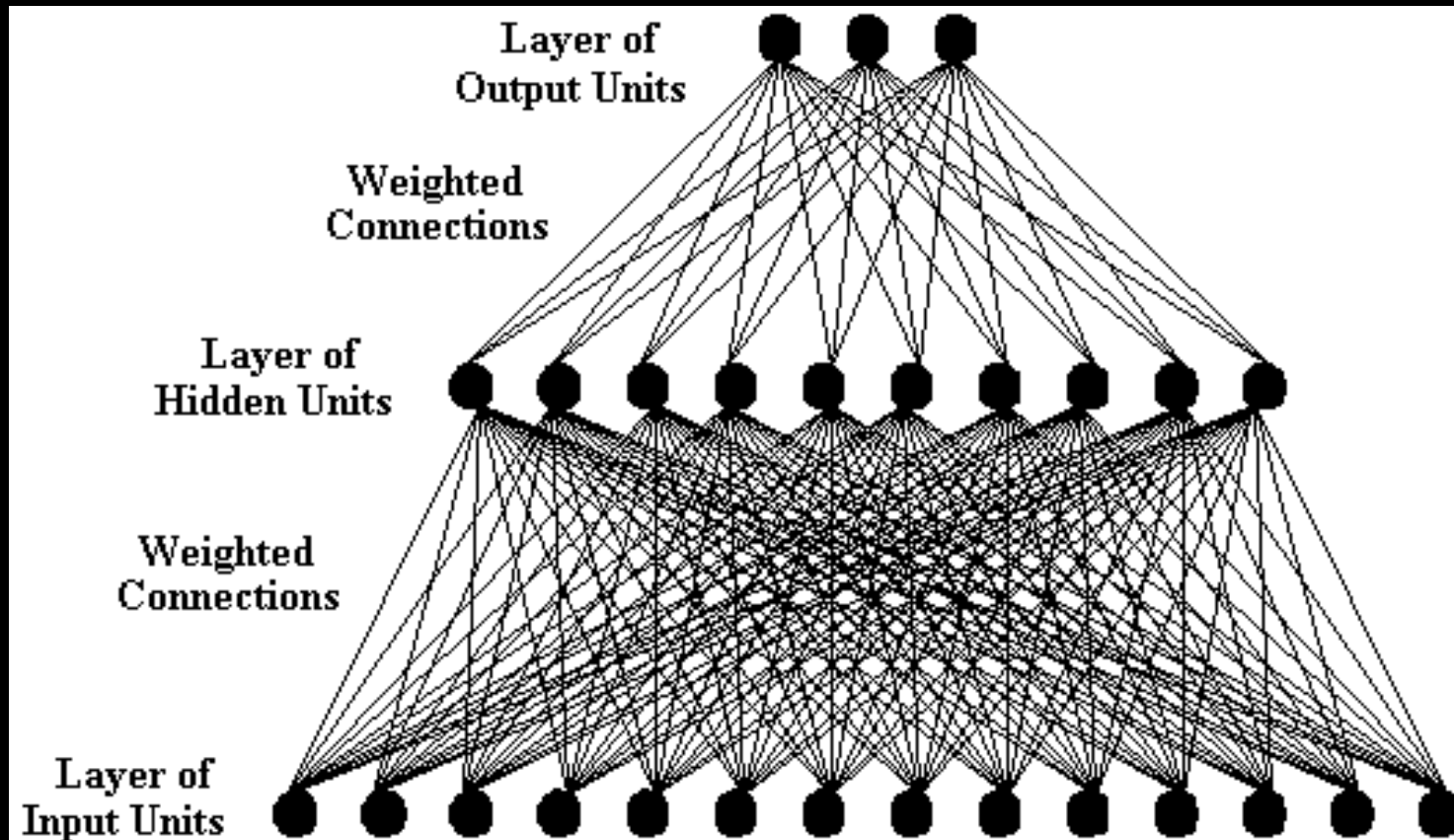
Why Adorno doesn't like Justin Bieber:

- Music goes beyond the other arts because it doesn't imitate but creates things anew.
- Can be used to create false consciousness—dumb music lacks conflict and deals with simple conflict in caricatures.
- The Culture Industry controls the masses by reproducing the most stupid things.
- Adorno: The composer is the servant or executor of music, not its master.

Part Three:

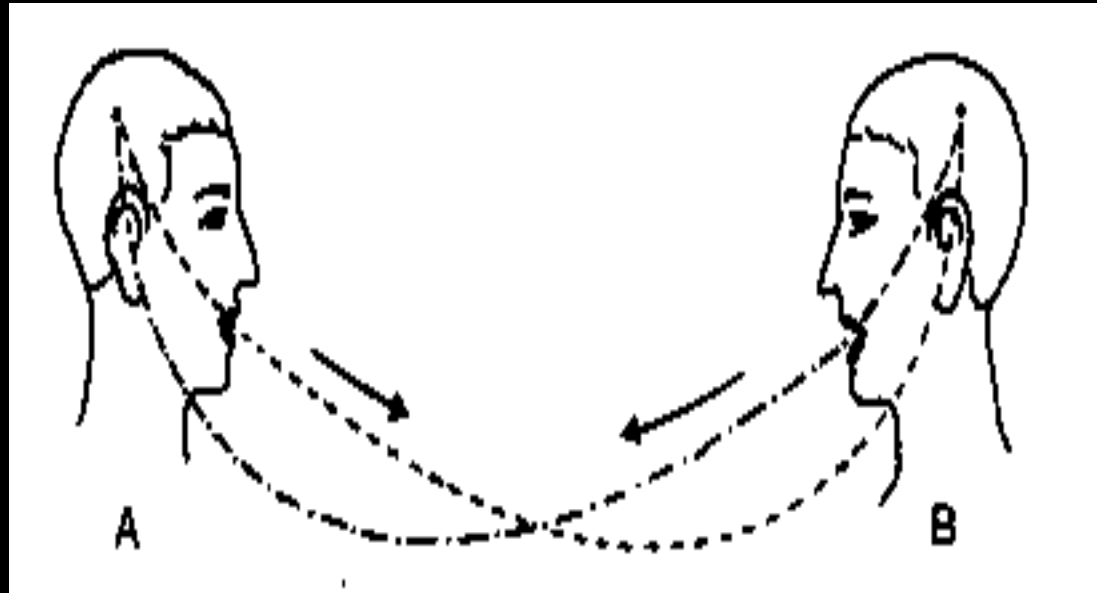
A modern psychological approach

Connectionism



Structural Linguistics: Ferdinand de Saussure

Language is considered both a moment to moment performance (parole) and speakers knowledge of the system itself is considered language.. Linguistics and Music, Monelle. p.33



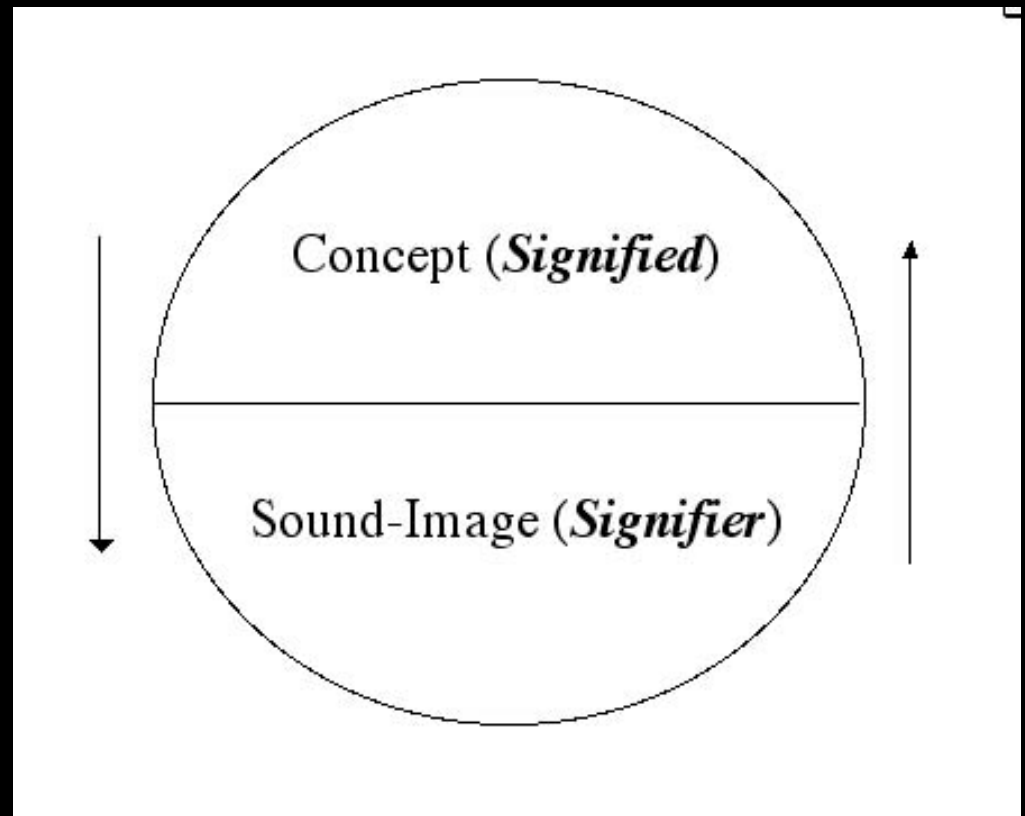
Saussure: Structural Linguistics

- The structure helps to provide the meaning
- Language can be broken up into gesture
 - The sounds (phonation and including mistakes) do not change the structure.
- The object versus written word versus the sounded word

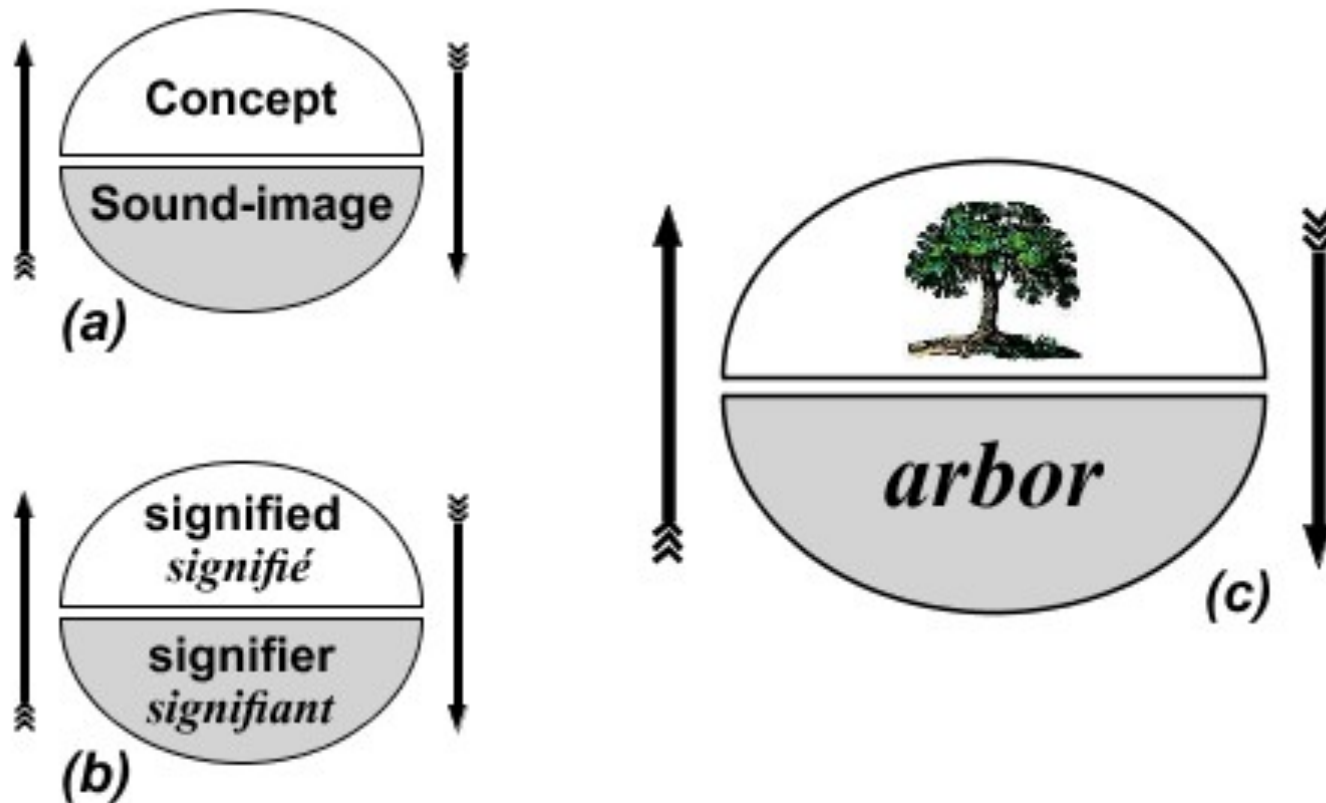
What does this really mean?

- The word merely represents a concept, the reality and meaning of it is categorically different—though inextricably linked.

From *General Course of Linguistics*:
Saussure

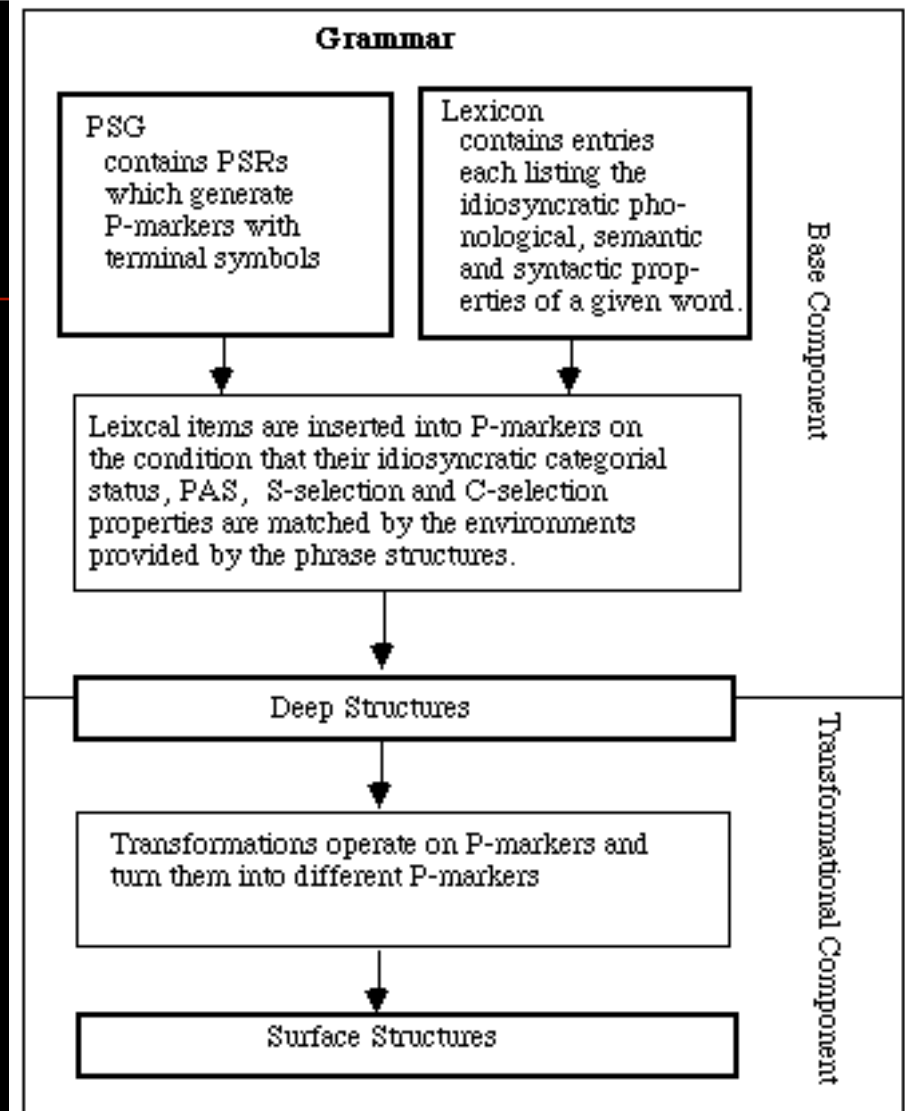


Saussure's Example



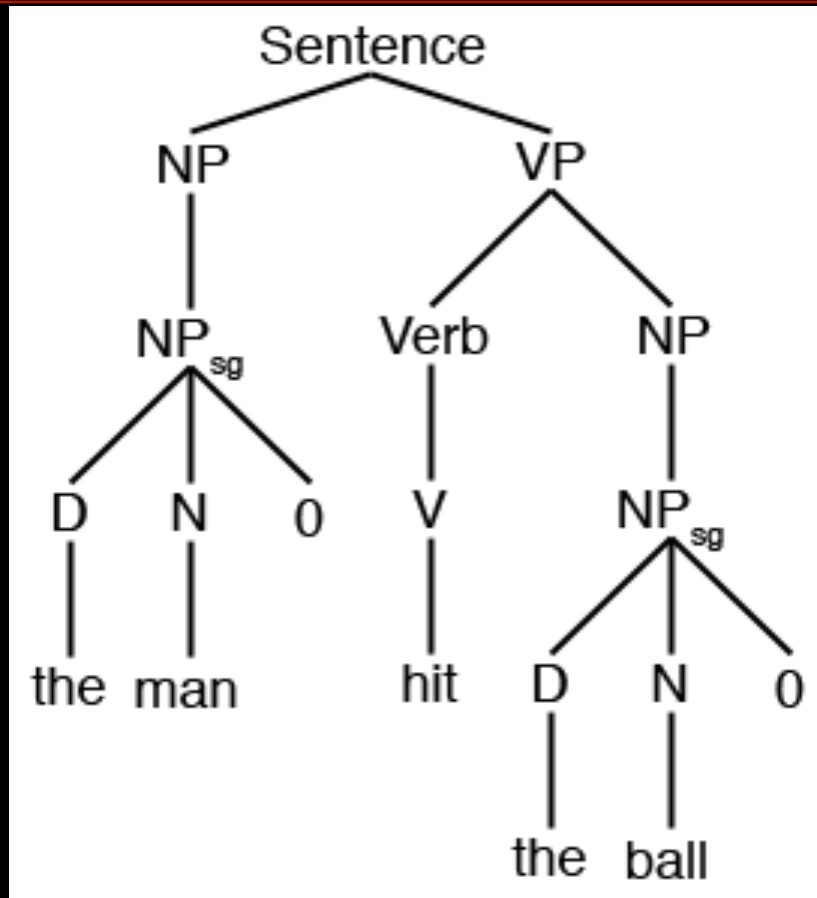
Generative and Transformational Grammar

- Simplified Definition:
Rule driven structures



From Dr. Huang: Intro to Syntax Lecture Notes, Harvard University.

Transformational and Generative Grammar



Hierarchical Models in Music

■ Generative/Linguistic Model

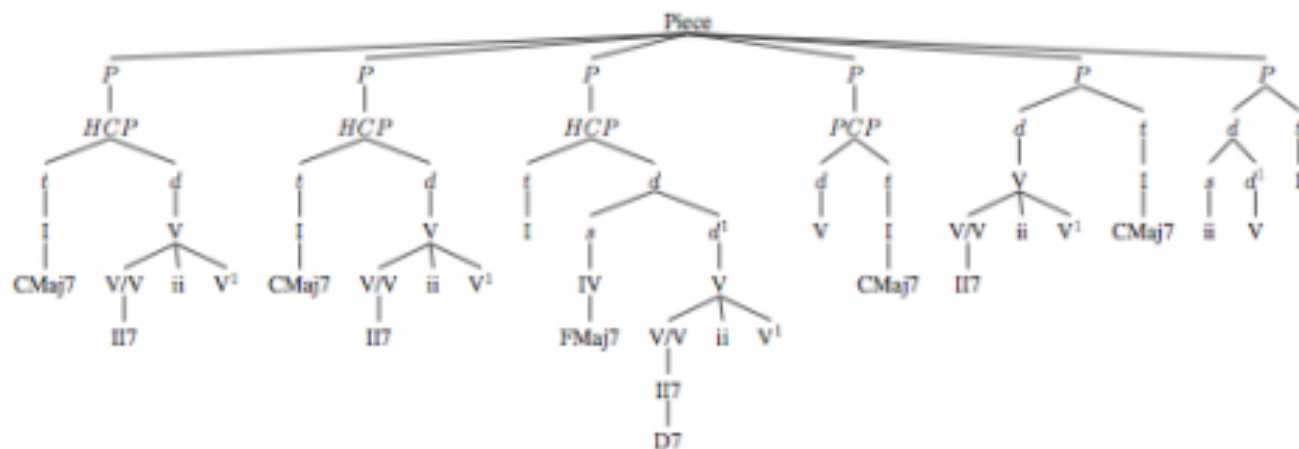


Figure 3. The Combined LLCES for every combination of phrases of the parse trees of *Take the 'A' Train* as in Fig. 1.

From “Modeling Harmonic Similarity Using a Generative Grammar of Tonal Harmony” by Hass, Rohrmeier, Veltkamp, and Weiring.

Heinrich Schenker

Takte: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

(Fermaten: 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3)

Url. Tafel

The musical score for 'Url. Tafel' consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of one flat. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The score is divided into 12 measures. Above the staves, there are fermatas (3) over measures 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several annotations in German: '(3 = 2 u g abw.) (Dance 1-2 u g)' above measure 3, '(3 = 2 u g)' above measure 5, '(3 = 2 u g abw.)' above measure 9, and '(3 = 2 u g)' above measure 11. Below the staves, there are annotations: '(10 - 8 - 10)' below measure 3, '(5 - 8) (11)' below measure 5, '(10 - 10 - 10) (10)' below measure 9, and '(8 - 7)' below measure 11. There are also dashed lines with annotations: '(Kopp. abw.)' below measure 3, '(Kopp. aufw.)' below measure 5, and '(Kopp. abw.)' below measure 11. The score is labeled 'Url. Tafel' on the left side.

From *Five Graphic Analysis*
by Heinrich Schenker.

Schematic Analysis

The image displays a musical score for two pieces, 'ROMANESCA' and 'PRINER', in 4/4 time. The score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff, with a bass line on a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The 'ROMANESCA' section is marked with a bracket and contains measures 1 through 6. The 'PRINER' section is marked with a bracket and contains measures 7 through 12. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers 1 through 7. Trills are marked with 'tr' and triplets with '3'. The bass line consists of a simple eighth-note accompaniment.

ROMANESCA

PRINER

Fingerings: ⑤ ⑤ ① tr ⑤ ⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ① ⑦ ⑥ ③ ④ ③ ② ⑤ ①

What does this all mean for you?

- How do we make sense of what we do:
 - Interpretation of music.
 - How do we teach music?
 - What is the importance of arts in society?
 - What does music say about us as a culture and as humans?
 - Is music important?