

From Allen Forte:

A series of sketches such as this can be read in several directions. For the purpose of the present introductory explanation it would seem advantageous to begin with the level which contains the fewest elements and proceed from there to the level which contains the most – thus, reading from top to bottom or from background to foreground. By reading the sketches in this order we also gain a clear idea of Schenker’s concept of *prolongation*: each subsequent level expands, or *prolongs*, the content of the previous level.

The background of this short song, and of all tonal works, whatever their length, is regarded as a temporal projection of the tonic triad³. The upper voice projects the triad in the form of a descending linear succession which, in the present case, spans the lower triadic third. Schenker marks this succession, which he called the *Urlinie*, or fundamental line, in two ways: (1) with numerals (and carets) which designate the corresponding diatonic scale degrees, and (2) with the balken [i.e., beam] which connects the stemmed *open* notes (I shall explain the black noteheads shortly). The triad is also projected by the bass, which here outlines the triadic fifth, the tonality-defining interval. Schenker calls this fundamental bass motion *Bassbrechung*, or bass arpeggiation. Like the fundamental line, it is represented in open note-heads. The fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation coordinate, forming a contrapuntal structure, the *Ursatz*, or fundamental structure which constitutes a complete projection of the tonic triad.⁴ Thus, to Schenker, motion within tonal space is measured by the triad, not by the diatonic scale.⁵

Observe that in this case the most direct form of the fundamental structure would be the three-interval succession in the outer voices:

fundamental line:	3	2	1
bass arpeggiation:	I	V	I

Note: from this point onwards, the union of fundamental line and bass arpeggiation is written with a slash between the two components, therefore 2/V means a second scale degree over V in the bass, or 3-2/I-V would refer to third scale degree over I in the bass followed by second scale degree over V in the bass, and so forth.

The background sketch shows that this succession occurs consecutively only in the last part of the song. The song begins unambiguously with 3

fundamental linear progression at the close of the exposition normally gives rise in the development section to a prolongation which centers on V. Of course, the prolonged fundamental line component varies, depending upon which form of the fundamental structure is in operation and upon which specific prolongation motions occur at the background level.

Before explaining the middleground, I should like to direct attention again to the diminution which spans the third below C# (black noteheads). By means of the numerals 3, 2, 1, enclosed in parentheses, Schenker indicates that the motion duplicates the large descending third of the fundamental line. This is an instance of a special kind of repetition which Schenker called *Übertragung der Ursatzformen* (transference of the forms of the fundamental structure). Throughout his writings he demonstrates again and again that tonal compositions abound in hidden repetitions of this kind, which he distinguishes from more obvious motivic repetitions at the foreground level.⁹

We can interpret the content of the middleground most efficiently by relating it to the background just examined. The first new structural event shown at the middleground level is the expansion of the smaller prolongational third (black noteheads) by means of the upper adjacent tone¹⁰, D, which serves as a prefix. The sketch shows how this prolongational element is counterpointed by the bass in such a way as to modify the original (i.e., background) third. That is, the figured-bass numerals in parentheses indicate that the second C# (black notehead) is a dissonant passing-tone, and therefore is not to be equated with the initial C#, which serves as the point of departure for the fundamental tone. The adjacent tone D recurs in m. 14, where Schenker assigns more structural weight to it, as indicated by the stem.¹¹ I reiterate that conventional durational values are used in the analytic sketches to indicate the relative position of a given component or configuration in the tonal hierarchy – the greater the durational value, the closer the element to the background.

In addition to the prolongation described in the preceding paragraph, the middleground contains the essentials of the prolongational middle section (mm. 9 – 12) which appears in more detail in the foreground sketch. Schenker regards this entire middle section as a prolongation of the background fifth formed by 2/V. Its main feature is the inner voice which descends from G# to E, a middleground duplication of the fundamental line's third. The bass which counterpoints this inner voice arpeggiates the tonic triad, E-C#-A. Schenker shows how the arpeggiation is partially filled in by the passing note, D, and by slurring E to A he indicates that he considers that motion to be the controlling bass motion, within which the C# functions as a connective of primarily melodic significance.¹² Here we have an example of the careful distinction which

⁹ SLF: motives may sometimes reduplicate the fundamental structure, as well.

¹⁰ Schenker's abbreviation, "Nbn.," stands for *Nebernote*, or in English, adjacent tone (not "neighbor tone").

¹¹ SLF: I don't understand Forte's remark here; in both previous instances of this same D (measure 2 and its 'clone' measure 6) the note is also stemmed, as it is in measure 14, so as far as I can tell there's no difference. In measure 14 Schenker does not add the notation (Nbn) which stands for 'adjacent tone'. Perhaps the F-natural in the piano part has something to do with that, but since the F-natural was reduced out in the foreground, there's no way of following his reasoning.

¹² The author adds here a footnote calling attention to Schenker's remarks: "The bass carries an arpeggiation of the fifth down through the third without, however, invalidating the interruption."

Schenker always draws between major bass components or *Stufen*, which belong to the background level, and more transient, contrapuntal-melodic events at the foreground and middleground levels.

A brief consideration of three additional events will complete our examination of the middleground level. First, observe that the diatonic inner-voice descent in the middle section, G#-E, is filled in by a chromatic passing-tone, G. Schenker has enclosed this in parentheses to indicate that it belongs to a subsidiary level within the middleground. Second, observe that just before the inner-voice motion is completed on the downbeat of m. 12, the G#, its point of departure, is restated by an additional voice which is introduced above it. Schenker has pointed out that in "free" compositions, particularly instrumental works, the possibility of more elaborate prolongation is greatly increased by introducing additional voices, as well as by abandoning voices already stated. The final event to observe here occurs in the middle section: the motion from B, the retained upper voice, to C# on the downbeat of m. 12. This direct connection does not actually occur at the foreground level, but Schenker, feeling that it is strongly implied by the voice-leading context, encloses the implied C# in parentheses and ties it to the actual C#, thereby indicating that it is an anticipation.¹³

In the foreground sketch Schenker represents for the first time the metrical organization of the song. As I have already mentioned, he shows here some of the actual durational values, in addition to using these as sketch symbols¹⁴. This reveals the position assigned to meter and rhythm in his system: he considered them to be important structural determinants at the middleground and foreground levels¹⁵ but subsidiary to the fundamental *tonal* organization, which, he maintained, was arhythmic.

Let us now examine some of the relationships which Schenker has shown in his sketch of the foreground, this time beginning with the bass. In m. 2 he encloses the bass-note A in parentheses¹⁶ and marks it with the abbreviation, *Kons. Dg.* (*Konsonanter Durchgang* "consonant passing-tone"). By this he indicates that the tenth which the bass A forms with the upper-voice C# transforms the latter, a dissonant passing-tone at the middleground level, into a consonance at the foreground level. In this way he also intends to indicate the function of the chord at that point. Since it supports a passing-tone in the upper voice it is a passing chord. In addition, it belongs only to the foreground and therefore is to be distinguished from the initial

¹³ SLF: This practice of adding 'implied' tones is one of the most controversial of Schenker's practices and definitely gives abundant fuel to arguments that Schenkerian analysis is far too easily 'massaged' to fit the underlying tonal theory.

¹⁴ SLF: this practice tends to confuse the reader, so it shouldn't be surprising to learn that most later Schenkerian analysts don't do it. In Schenker's foreground analysis the flags in measures 3 and 4 are probably rhythmic in nature, but they also seem to imply that the C# and A relate to a more significant level, which is also true. Most readers are uncomfortable with this lack of clarity.

¹⁵ SLF: although he said very little about "how" they were important and, in fact, tends to be rather arbitrary about the entire issue.

¹⁶ SLF: Forte identifies this as measure 3, but measures are counted starting with the first *complete* measure, and not with upbeat measures, so I've corrected him.

tonic chord, a background element.¹⁷ Two of Schenker's most important convictions underlie this treatment of detail: (1) that the study of strict counterpoint provides the indispensable basis for a thorough understanding of the details, as well as the larger patterns of a composed work, and (2) that the function of a chord depends upon its context, not upon its label. This can be seen in his notation of the chords in this sketch. Although he uses the conventional Roman numerals he provides them with slurs, dashes and parentheses to show their relative values in the tonal

in Brahms's *Intermezzo in Bb major*, Op. 76/4; and, of course, we find a special development of this concept in Bach's compositions for solo violin and for solo cello. Here, in the foreground sketch of the middle section the diagonal beams show that the vocal melody shifts back and forth between two lines, the lower of which belongs to the accompaniment²². It is evidence that this section contains the most intricate upper-voice prolongation.

It also contains the most elaborate bass motion. The sketch shows how the bass provides counterpoint to the upper-voice (foreground) prolongation of B, bass and upper voice comprising the interval succession 5-10-5-10-5, which is enclosed within the middleground outer-voice succession, B-C#/E-C#. Observe that the upper voice alternates between an upper adjacent-tone prolongation of B (marked *Nbr.*) and the skips into the inner voice which were explained in the preceding paragraph. The lowest voice in this passage is subordinate to the voice which lies immediately above it, E-D-C#, the latter succession being the actual bass line (cf. middleground sketch). Nor does its registral position above the foreground bass lessen its importance as the main motion-determinant in the lower voices. Therefore, the foreground bass which displaces or covers it registrally might be termed a "pseudo-bass."²³

fifths and ascending fourths in the middle section). However, because of space limitations, I shall not undertake a summary here, but instead to go on to discuss other aspects of Schenker's work. If the preceding commentary has succeeded in demonstrating some of Schenker's more important ideas, as well as clarifying some of the vocabulary and visual devices which he employs to express those ideas, it has fulfilled its purpose.