

“The Submerged Urlinie and Musical Narrative”

Brent Yorgason’s (2020) model of Urlinie Play extends the Schenkerian analytical project to trace rivalries between structural lines in the soprano and lower voices (“Submerged Urlinien”). Yorgason distinguishes between focal and non-focal (“shadow”) Urlinien, defining strategies of Urlinie Play based on their degree of structural dependency. Yorgason, however, does not address questions of musical narrative. Therefore, we ask how the Urlinie Play model intersects with recent theories of musical narrative. Hatten (1994, 2004) and Almén (2008) build their theories from basic oppositions in musical and semantic domains. We thus reorient the Urlinie Play model around a basic opposition between low and high registers, then trace each work’s overall direction in focal pitch and mode (major or minor). This approach suggests a new typology of registral narrative archetypes, which we have found to be predictive of expressive meaning across works by Chopin, Schumann, and Saint-Saëns.