

Von einem Künstler: Shapes in the Clouds

Stephen Slottow

Abstract

A theme of the Sixth International Conference on Music Theory in Tallinn, Estonia (2010) was: “in view of a certain element of subjectivity and irrationality inherent in traditional Schenkerian analysis, is it possible to develop its deep insights in the context of a logically non-contradictory, scientifically, and historically well-founded music theory?” My response to this critique of “traditional” Schenkerian analysis includes the following observations: (1) subjectivity, far from being a necessary evil to be eliminated as much as possible, is rather an unavoidable, necessary, and positive component of analysis; (2) analysis, like performance, is interpretive; (3) other, more recent, analytical methods with far greater pretensions of scientific objectivity than Schenkerian analysis are equally, if not more, subjective in practice; (4) Schenker explicitly rejected the characterization of his work as science, preferring to view it as art; (5) analysis can itself be viewed as a performative act; and (6) that Schenkerian analysis is not only a theory and a system, but also a practice and a craft. To illustrate the role of multiple readings in Schenkerian analysis, I compare three interpretations of the development section of Muzio Clementi’s G major Sonata, Op. 36, No. 2.