

# Tracking Relational Spaces on Record: A Multipart Perspective on the Analysis of Recorded Popular Music

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## Abstract

One of the divides between traditional and popular music is the different status of the performance in the two. In the former, it is generally understood as a live event, an extemporary composition realized in the here and now, whereas in popular music the recorded performance is an object based on performative materials (the recording), which in turn can influence subsequent live performances. Despite this difference, the concept of multipart music may nevertheless be fruitful in both domains of music studies in approaching both actual and mediatised performances. After a theoretical discussion of issues related to mediation and production processes, including the temporal aspects of collaboration through recording and the spatial dimension constructed by the stereophonic mix, the paper will apply the concept of multipart music to an analysis of the main theme from *Shaft* by Isaac Hayes. Here the perspective provided by this conceptual tool will provide the key to unpacking its meanings and cultural significance, starting from a consideration of its structural details and subsequently revealing the connections between text and context.

The discussion of whether multipart music could offer a reliable theoretical framework for the study and the analysis of recorded popular music becomes constructive when it leads to a different and unified conceptualization of some aspects of a track's structural and aural organization. With respect to traditional music, for which the concept of 'multipart music' was first elaborated, the application of the concept to a different context of music production and reception requires a series of methodological and disciplinary caveats to be introduced, which will be discussed in the second section of the article. In this first part, however, I want briefly to underline why the challenge of using it as part of the theoretical toolbox for popular music analysis could add a new perspective to the consideration of the nexus between structures and the generation of meaning in the reception of recorded tracks. In Macchiarella (2012: 22), multipart music is defined as:

Any musical behavior producing at least two intentional sound sequences, regulated by specific rules for their overlapping, each of which is performed by one single person or several people in unison, who maintain a distinctiveness of their own, within contexts of

strict interaction and interpersonal relationships.

What makes the concept appealing from the point of view of a scholar interested in contemporary mass-mediated cultural production is its positive ambiguity. By including in one and the same definition the structural, performative and relational elements of a musical object, the adjective 'multipart' introduces a view on music-making as a shared practice in which various people are involved in different roles, and where the divides between who sings or plays and who is listening, or between who sets the conditions for the act of music making and who makes the music are blurred, in favor of a holistic approach to a cultural practice in all its complexity. By foregrounding the activities that originate musical utterances and the social interactions involved in making them happen, the concept provides an analytical matrix to understand music as a set of relationships: between the musical elements within a specific song, between the performers, between the musicians and their audience. Focusing on the "expressive behavior based on the intentionally distinct and coordinated participation in the performing act",<sup>1</sup> the field circumscribed

<sup>1</sup> This quote is taken from the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) web page with the presentation of the Study Group on Multipart Music: <http://www.ictmusic.org/group/multipart-music> (9 March 2016).

by the expression 'multipart music' has the merit of linking two fundamental dimensions: musical structures, and the social forces from which the former acquire meaningfulness.<sup>2</sup>

Such a relational framework is also crucial for any account of the geographically and historically situated technological, social and stylistic practices that shape the category of cultural artifacts broadly defined by the expression 'popular music'.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the network defined by the multipart perspective promises to be a way to deal with the intense debate within the international community of scholars in popular music studies, where sociological, culturalist and textual approaches still struggle to gain mutual recognition (Wall 2003: 133–136; Shuker 2001: 16–25). In what follows I will first sketch the theoretical extent and the pragmatic consequences of using the conceptualization of multipart music-making for an analytical approach to recorded popular music, in particular regarding the organization of the single parts into an overall perceptual object shaped by specific structural and aural characteristics. Subsequently I will discuss how such an abstract paradigm can be used to address the significance of the opening theme from the film *Shaft*, as written, performed, recorded and produced by Isaac Hayes, in a context in which the musical features of tracks can be read as part of a representation of the spatial and processual relationships in which the recording frames both the performer and its listeners in a shared – though virtual – event.

In this respect the plasticity of the concept of multipart music is surely an added value, as it can be readily applied to different musical practices because it is less context-specific than terms such as 'polyphony', 'heterophony' and the like. Developed within a community of music scholars in the field of ethnomusicology, it is an etic term whose history is not strictly related to specific musical processes. Rather, it remains available for use across different repertoires, the common denominator being only the interest for "what individu-

als do when they sing/play together in organized ways" (Macchiarella 2012: 9). The hypothesis at the core of my analysis is that a careful consideration of the relational, socio-cultural network associated with the production of recorded tracks can shed light on the processes of meaning construction if they are considered – at least symbolically – as part of a performative event constructed on a recorded artifact. The consequence of such a shift is that the relational perspective at the core of the multipart view of music making can be used to approach recording holistically, linking more strongly the structural features of the music with its impact on audiences in terms of signification and cultural value. If multipart music can be thought of in terms of an 'experiential *Gestalt*',<sup>4</sup> then its use can help overcome the apparent opposition between textual and contextual approaches still affecting different areas of (not only popular) music studies.

### 1. Popular music as a multipart practice

One of the distinctive features of popular music is the special relation it has with recording, which at the same time conditions its compositional process and commercial circulation. By saying this, I do not mean to overshadow the relevance of live performance in the reception and social significance of this music. I would argue, rather, that in comparison with other modes of music making, in popular music technological mediation plays a crucial role not only as a technical means of capturing and preserving a performance for recreational or commercial purposes, but also as the horizon of its compositional project, where a specific professional figure – the producer – acquires an unprecedented position of power (Hennion 1989). From this point of view, popular music can be distinguished from other types of music as a field of cultural production in which the passage to the era of 'phonographic composition' – at the end of the 1960s – marked a profound watershed, helping define it as the sonic art most concerned

<sup>2</sup> For a survey on the issues regarding the role of music analysis in the field of popular music studies, and on the multiple perspective from which this topic has been addressed, see Middleton (1993, 2000), Covach (1997, 2001), Fink (2002), Moore (2003, 2012a), Spicer and Covach (2010), Helms and Phleps (2012), Tagg (2012).

<sup>3</sup> A theoretical 'systems model' of creativity in the recording studio has been recently presented by Philip McIntyre in several publications (see for example 2008 and 2012).

<sup>4</sup> According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson these are "[...] ways of organizing experiences into *structured wholes*" that make "our experience *coherent*" (2003: 81).

with 'acoustical publication' (Julien 2008). With respect to traditional music, for which the concept of 'multipart music' was first elaborated, such a shift marks a difference that we must carefully consider before moving forward.

Again, a closer look at production processes can help us in this regard, if we consider the activities associated with recording in their relational nature. On the one hand, in the aural experience of sound the temporal or spatial dissociation between the performer and his or her listeners does not rule out its social significance as a cultural artifact. As in other examples of musical practices in which no audience is present during the physical production of sounds, an audience is nevertheless implied in the performative act:

Individual practice is one of the rare musical occasions where there is no involvement with a co-performer or spectator, but even here there is generally a social goal: the preparation of a performance. Recordings might seem to be another exception, but the social element is still implied: there is a need to communicate the musical content to someone else, even if for the duration of the recording the audience is imaginary (Davidson 2004: 57).

A consideration of the production chain of record making offers another way to look at those 'patterns of musical behavior' at the core of the definition of multipart music, as long as we acknowledge the shift in our object of analysis from a performance realized in real time to a virtual performance resulting from the non-linear editing of pre-recorded materials (Heiser 2012). Such a move not only made it possible to imagine different objects in terms of multipart music, but also brought the moment of reception to the forefront, centering analytical discourse on the objectification of a collective act of music-making witnessed by – or, better, built to be experienced through – the record.

Focusing on reception also means recognizing popular music as a form of art in which collec-

tive authorship is the rule and not the exception (Ahonen 2008; Furini 2010; Negus 2011). Here the analogy with cinema is a useful one: even though common discourses on films assume that the 'author' of a particular movie is the director, even a cursory glance at the opening – or closing – credits proves the falsity of this belief, showing how many professional figures have contributed to the final cut. The director here, like the musician (or musicians) who takes credit as being chiefly responsible for a record, acts as the centre of a network in which the sheer number of technical parameters involved are too overwhelming for a single individual. The final result is, then, the end point of an extensive collaborative effort in which the director has the role of providing the initial impulse, taking the most important decisions and coordinating the activities of his co-workers. In the case of recording, this task is actually shared between the musician (or the band) who is credited as the main authorial character, and the artistic producer, often a behind-the-scenes figure working on behalf of the record company or as a freelance. In unpacking such a relationship, it can be useful to borrow from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997: 6) the conceptualization of creativity as the outcome of dynamic interactions within "a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings the novelty into the domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation". Phillip McIntyre (2008, 2012) has developed a model to understand the social relationships within the recording studio in a relational matrix. In particular, he stresses the relevance of the producer in the field of popular music; as long as we move in a commodified field in which commercial and artistic choices ought to proceed hand in hand, his/her function is decisive as the centre of a network of professionals working around studio practices. In fact, he is the character who has accumulated the largest amount of economic, cultural and social capital in his professional life,<sup>5</sup> so as to achieve the best results with the fewest resources:

<sup>5</sup> The different forms of capital discussed here by McIntyre are drawn from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, as he discusses culture as a field of knowledge in which different configurations of power relationships are shaped by the amount of various kinds of personal resources. In this context economic power could have the same relevance as other aspects of knowledge that encourage the distinction and the power of a single actor in the context of the cultural production as a broader field (Bourdieu 1984, 1986, 1993, 1994).

a producer's and engineer's ability to wield the power within the field, and therefore get things done in the studio, is dependent in many instances on the accumulation of the cultural capital they hold as well as the maintenance of social relations within the field (McIntyre 2008).

Moving our consideration of recorded artifacts and their production processes towards a discussion of multipart music as an analytical perspective for popular music tracks also implies paying close attention to the moment of listening. In the moment of listening a specific kind of relationship with the audience is brought about by the aural experience of sound, especially after the introduction of the stereophonic mix. Effects of sound spatialization, such as panning, layering and reverb, affect the proxemic space created around the listener and position him in a space defined by the main characteristics of the 'sound-box'.<sup>6</sup> The relational space shaped by the recorded track is the result of the relative positions of the performers and the listener within such an aurally constructed 'scene'. Here the audience is not a mere receiver of an act of communication, rather it is involved in the simulation of a performative act in which the listener is part of a larger horizon in which the music is being produced; this virtual staging is, in turn, assembled from the sounds captured, manipulated and edited in the studio (and – literally – reproduced 'live' only in the moment when they are being read from their physical support). From this point of view, the audience is given a specific point of hearing and, consequently, a specific role in the act of music-making, concurring with the musicians in the enactment of a 'performative event' that repeats itself every time a track is heard. Such a consideration of listening is crucial for my discussion of the application of the multipart paradigm to popular music, because it links producers and receivers of a cultural artifact within a sort of 'imagined performative community' unified by the means of

phonography. Such a shared space constructed on record promises to bridge the gap between the temporally and geographically dispersed listeners of a record, making them part of a collective body unified by their experience of the same media artifact. I will come back to the relevance of this idea, as well as of its consequence for processes of meaning construction, in the last part of this paper, after the discussion of the case study.

## 2. The theme from *Shaft*: practicing a multipart analytical perspective

Starting from the conceptual basis outlined above, we can now focus on the theme from *Shaft* in order to show how the framework provided by the concept of multipart music can offer some useful theoretical and practical hints for the analysis and interpretation of this song. The inextricable knot between shared expressive conventions and social formations at the core of a multipart perspective is especially significant in relation to genres which have received little attention from scholars in music and music theory until recent times, such as those related to dance.<sup>7</sup> From the point of view of musical construction the function of these genres separates them from other kinds of popular music: they are aimed primarily at producing physical involvement, and all the details of their musical structure are deemed to elicit an embodied apprehension of musical facts (Zeiner-Henriksen 2010). Moreover, the construction of funky grooves as the result of the interlocking patterns described by Philip Tagg (2012: 465–466), as well as their organization in sensory-motor repetitive structures that can be repeated at will according to the response of the dance-floor, calls for their formal principle to be considered according to a 'cumulative' (Spicer 2004) logic, rather than the sectional logic of the 'classic' song derived from the Tin Pan Alley tradition.<sup>8</sup>

What is relevant to these genres in the multipart conception of music is, first of all, the reference to a participatory mode of music-making in

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of these issues, see Moylan 2002; Doyle 2005; Moore 2010; Moore, Schmidt and Dockwray 2009. In a similar vein, we could also refer to the concept of 'aural staging' introduced by Philip Tagg (Tagg 2012: 299ff).

<sup>7</sup> Notable exemptions are Tagg (1994), Hawkins (2003) and Garcia (2005).

<sup>8</sup> As defined by Spicer (2004: 29): "In a cumulative form [...] thematic fragments are gradually introduced and developed, only to crystallize into a full-fledged presentation of the main theme in a climatic pay-off at the end of the piece". In his essay, this type of form is strongly connected to the use of studio techniques (especially multitrack recording and editing) as a compositional tool, which in turns stimulates new possibilities for the formal development of a track.

**Example 1.** Basic groove of the theme from *Shaft*.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Electric Guitar and Drum Set. The Electric Guitar part is written in a 4/4 time signature and features a melodic line with a 'wah pedal' effect indicated by a dashed line above the staff. The Drum Set part is also in 4/4 time and features a consistent hi-hat pattern with accents on the offbeats.

which not only the musicians are involved, but in which the audience also has a role. We have already seen how, in recorded music, the connection between individual styles and their intended performative contexts is embedded in the characteristics of the sounds themselves – being the result of the aural *mise en scène* represented in the ‘sound-box’. In addition, the technical peculiarities of such genres, in which iteration and the modular use of short rhythmic or melodic patterns (treated as compoundable units at the origin of a plurality of textural and rhythmic combinations) are more important than thematic development and harmonic sequencing, force us to expand our “conception of music to include not just formal structures but also *processes*” in the vein of black music scholarship that “has helped to open up a dimension of music theory that is useful for the study of all kinds of music” (Dudley 2008: 24). Having inherited most of its distinctive features from African music – including the organization of rhythmical and timbre distributions based on the principle of contrast, a percussive approach to instrumental and vocal parts, a recourse to antiphonal structures and an incorporation of physical bodily motion<sup>9</sup> – Black American styles can be good targets for testing an analysis grounded on the idea of multipart music. I chose to focus here on the theme song from the film *Shaft* (1971, Gordon Parks) by Isaac Hayes<sup>10</sup> because it is not a straightforward example of music made primarily for dancing and/or listening – although it takes up, for the sake of their audiovisual connotations, the most widespread stylistic conventions from

the music of James Brown, Wilson Pickett, Sly and the Family Stone etc. The connection with the film further reinforces the link with a specific cultural identity and historical situation – Black American youth of the 1970s –, highlighting how processes of meaning construction can spring up from the interaction between text and context.<sup>11</sup>

The first issue to be addressed in considering this track from a multipart perspective is the establishment of its groove, a 4-bar drum and guitar pattern grounded in the interaction between two elements: the 16-semiquaver series on the hi-hat – which acts as the basis for all the rhythmical events of the track, being the shortest rhythmical value –, and the guitar riff, whose overall sound is characterized by the rhythmic use of the *wah wah* pedal and by a melodic content based on the open-chord fifth g-d (Ex. 1). The drum pattern is played with only occasional and slight variations – accenting some offbeats with the open hi-hat to mark hypermetrical 4- and 8-bar cycles – with the exception of the sung section in which a different beat provides the rhythmic background (2’41”–3’41”). Usually the 16 semiquavers are grouped into four equal groups, with the first note of each set of semiquavers accented to mark the downbeat. The guitar riff is made out of two types of 1-bar units. Rhythmically, both play with the regularity of the drum pattern by placing their main events on- and off-beat. In the first, after two repetitions of the same pitch (g<sub>2</sub>) on the first and second beat, the upward movement to g<sub>3</sub> is highlighted both by its position on the fourth semiquaver of the beat and by the movement of

<sup>9</sup> Comprehensive surveys on the markers of Africanness in Black American music, both from a structural and a cultural point of view, can be found in Wilson (1983) and Kubik (1999).

<sup>10</sup> The analysis was made considering the recorded version of the theme song in the original soundtrack album (Isaac Hayes, *Shaft*. Enterprise ENS-2-5002, 1971) because of the higher definition of the instrumental parts and sound spatialization. However, minor variations in the musical substance that can be found in this source do not radically alter the cultural significance of this track as it emerges from the audiovisual complex.

<sup>11</sup> On the connection between African-American popular music and culture, some general references include Boyd (2008), Hall (2001) and Holloway (2005).

**Example 2.** Isaac Hayes, theme from *Shaft*, bars 1–8.

The image displays a musical score for the theme from *Shaft* by Isaac Hayes, covering bars 1 through 8. The score is arranged in four staves. The top staff is for Electric Guitar, the second for Drum Set, the third for E. Gtr. (Electric Guitar), and the fourth for D. S. (Drum Set). The music is in 4/4 time. The Electric Guitar part features a melodic riff that is repeated every four bars, with a 'wah pedal' effect indicated above the notes in the final part of the bar. The Drum Set part consists of a hi-hat pattern with accents on the downbeat and a bass drum pattern. The E. Gtr. and D. S. parts are also shown, with the D. S. part featuring a complex rhythmic pattern of accents and notes.

the *wah* pedal, that lets the sound of the guitar become gradually richer in the high frequencies in the final part of the bar. The second unit of the guitar riff is interpolated with the first once every 4 bars, closing a larger hypermetrical cycle. The second element is a sort of diminution of the first element, and it can be seen as the double repetition of a 2-beat pattern in which a recurring figure (semiquaver + quaver on  $g_2$ ) frames a quaver on  $g_3$ , so the eight semiquaver notes of the half-measure are grouped into the uneven sequence 1+2+2+1+2. As in the first cell, the shift from lower to higher pitch is highlighted by using the *wah* pedal, and this introduces a further perceptual sign of temporal intensification with respect to the first cell of the riff.

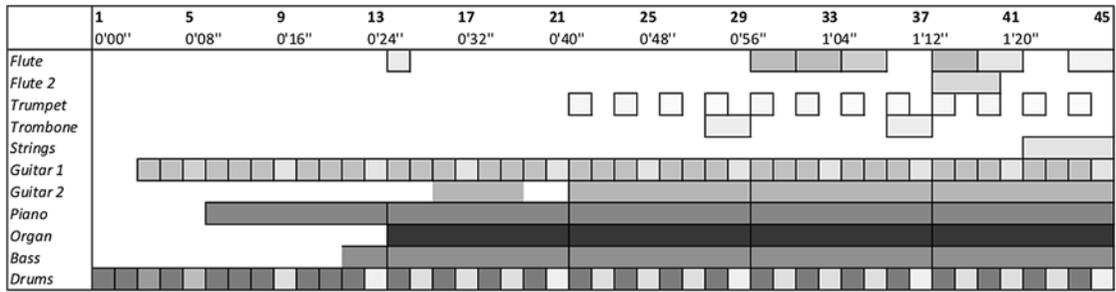
The interaction between the regular articulation of the 4/4 pattern in the hi-hat part and the syncopation of the guitar riff in the first bars of the theme from *Shaft* shows a clear example of what could be labeled as a multipart logic. Here the common metrical grid affords different levels of musical organization, all seemingly independent of each other, and – at the same time – synchronized hyper-metrically in relation to a shared reference (Moore 2012a: 51–64).<sup>12</sup> As in many dance music genres, synchronization is here not on the standard rock ‘backbeat’,<sup>13</sup> but it happens mainly on the first and – once every four bars – on the

third beat. More interesting, though, is that this convergence towards climactic moments in the micro-rhythmic dimension involves – considering only the two foundational parts of the groove – at least three different levels of articulation. The first is the 1-beat pattern of the hi-hat, which divides the bar into four parts with the accent on the downbeat. The second level is represented by the 1-bar pattern in the melodic riff of the guitar, which groups the preceding 1-beat pattern into longer unities composed by four equal cells. The third level is the result of sequencing the two basic cells of the guitar riff into 4-bar phrases, according to an *aaab* scheme. Such a temporal interlocking involves different actors coming into play: at least a drummer, a guitarist, and their combined action, which is essential for the final result. The multipart logic at the core of their interaction can thus be seen both as a compositional effect of a performative practice based on layering short units into complex patterns, as well as putting into the foreground the collaborative effort of music making, since any part can be connected to a single musician in the band. This also offers listeners, thanks among other things to the effect of the sound design detailed below, the opportunity to understand the record as an inclusive, participatory act.

What is also relevant in the relationship between the constituent parts of the groove of the

<sup>12</sup> The synchronization between drum-kit and guitar is also supported by the technique of string muting, typical of funk and soul music. In this case, while the right hand strums on the strings – muted by the left hand – a regular 16th-note pattern (a sort of ‘implied’ underlining beat coinciding with the hi-hat pattern), the left hand lets the notes of the riff sound by pressing the finger on the fret-board.

<sup>13</sup> I.e. in correspondence with the 2nd and 4th beat of the 4/4 metrical grid.

**Figure 1.** Isaac Hayes, theme from *Shaft*, instrumental patterns and temporal distribution (00'00"–01'30").

theme from *Shaft* is that the establishment of such a rhythmical background in the first bars of the song is shown as the outcome of a process. In the first seconds of the track we literally hear the temporal negotiation between the two parts; then, only after this moment, the track really begins.

After two bars in which we hear the semiquaver drum pattern played on the closed hi-hat alone, on the first beat of the third bar the opening of the cymbals on the upbeat precedes the first note of the guitar riff (cell *a*), which starts on the second beat of the third measure (Ex. 2). In bar 4 the riff is repeated, but it ends at the beginning of the following bar, where a complementary rhythmical figure is proposed by the two instruments: the drums play a semiquaver-semiquaver-quaver pattern on – respectively – closed-closed and open hi-hat, while the guitar plays a quaver-semiquaver-semiquaver pattern with the lowest pitch ( $g_2$ ) on the downbeat and the higher ( $g_3$  and  $d_3$ ) on the upbeat. This incisive instrumental gesture eventually sets up the close correspondence between the rhythmic organization of the two instruments; from now on there will be no other disruption of the regular 4/4 metrical grid, until the end of the track. The first chord struck on the piano on the first beat of bar 6 confirms that the metrical organization first proposed by the hi-hat, then contrasted by the guitar, and finally regained by the complementary rhythms in bar 5, acts as the ‘true’ point of reference for the other parts.

As the analysis of *Shaft*'s basic groove shows, the multipart conception of music underlines that the structural organization of a track like this is – first and foremost – based on different levels of temporal organization characterized by the repetition and juxtaposition of recursive and mod-

ular patterns (Middleton 1983), each associated with a specific instrument and, presumably, with a performer. In the case of *Shaft*, repetition is not intended to be organized within 8-, 16-, or 32-bar closed sections, being rather the foundation for a cumulative musical structure that has no clear structural articulations (with the exception of the main macro-formal sections described in the following sentences), over which an indefinite number of textural layers can be superimposed. A process of progressive thickening of the overall sound is repeated twice in the first (00'00"–01'44") and in the second instrumental section (01'44"–02'41"). Then the call-and-response between Isaac Hayes and the answering Bar-Kays choir introduces a contrasting moment, which ends at 03'41" – when the hi-hat and guitar groove is introduced again. Even though the overall concept of form can be described as a set of closed sections, it would be probably best viewed in terms of a tension between repeated versus non-repeated elements – e.g. in the transition between the first and the second section, when the groove remains unaltered while the other instrumental parts change abruptly –, as well as between continuous versus non-continuous iterative patterns.

From the micro-formal point of view of the arrangement, repetition and the introduction of new instrumental layers seem to organize the track into 8-bar cycles, but this logic, too, results from a dynamic opposition between two instrumental groups according to their different functions. The accompanying parts, such as the bass (bar 12 – 00'22"), guitar 2 (bar 16 – 00'30") and trombone (bar 28 – 00'55") actually tend to disrupt this regularity, beginning respectively on the sixth (bass and trombone) and on the second (guitar 2) bar of the cycle. On the contrary, the

**Example 3.** Isaac Hayes, theme from *Shaft*, bars 6–13.

first introduction of the melodic parts tends to be placed at the beginning of the hypermetric unit, as with the trumpets (bar 22 – 00'41'') and flutes (bar 30 – 00'59''), even though the latter begin their melodic riff on the third beat of the measure.

In such a structure, temporal flow has a stronger relevance than harmony, which works as a semantic indicator of growing tension. The occasional dissonances between the parts – together with the increasing complexity of the texture – conjure up a sense of anxiety that fits perfectly with the topic and the narrative context of the film. Even though the scale of *g Mixolydian* is clearly the modal centre of the song, the open octaves on the piano alternating four bars on *f* (minor seventh) and four bars on *e* (major sixth) serve more as gestures to enhance the sense of continuous flow, rather than functional movements gravitating around a goal-directed framework (Ex. 3).

Another example can be found in the trumpet part, with the short motivic cells beginning on *e* against the background *f* in the piano (bar 22), and on *d* against the background *e* (bar 26) (Ex. 4).

One final issue related to the use of the conceptual tool of multipart music in analyzing popular music regards the relational spaces constructed in the recorded performance by the sound design and the spatialization of sound sources. Two specific features of the theme from *Shaft* work together in the aural representation of the relationships designed by the collective 'author' of the track for the listeners. Through the act of listening, the latter become part of an environment designed to facilitate the "coordinated participation in the performing act by sharing knowledge and shaping values".<sup>14</sup> First, the lyrics and their performative technique mimic the antiphonal logic between a soloist and its followers typical of many collective activities of Black American communities, from the sacred to the profane. The hierarchy between the two parts (call versus response) is reinforced in the mix by the louder volume of Hayes's voice compared to the collective reply of the falsetto choir. In this detail, the track fosters identification on the part of its intended audience by replicating one of the most wide-

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. note 1.

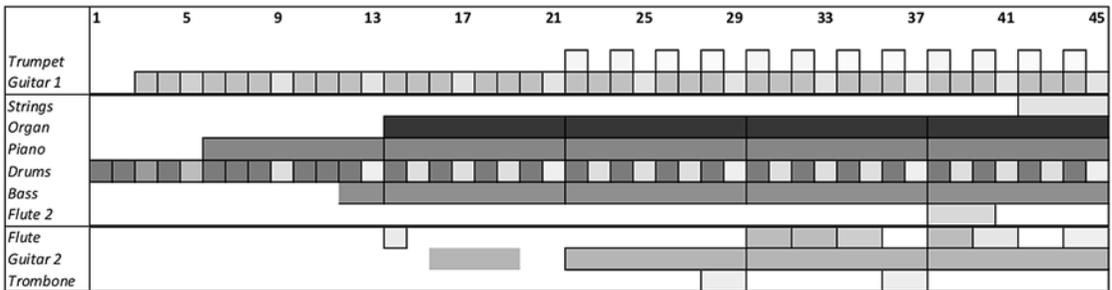
**Example 4.** Isaac Hayes, theme from *Shaft*, bars 22–29.

The musical score for Isaac Hayes' 'Shaft' theme, bars 22–29, is presented in two systems. The first system includes parts for Trumpet, Electric Guitar (with wah pedal), Electric Guitar (with rhythmic wah), Organ, Piano, Electric Bass, and Drum Set. The second system includes parts for Tpt., E.Gtr., E.Gtr., Org., P.no., E.B., and D. S. The music is in 4/4 time and features a prominent wah-wah guitar sound and a steady drum pattern.

spread behavioral rules within such a context. At the same time the use of the choir can also be intended, more generally, as a direct call for participation in the act of music-making addressed to the listener, who occupies the same space as this collective body – not by chance positioned in the

central part of the mix. A second point that can be referred to a relational logic in *Shaft*'s theme is, indeed, the inclusive quality of the space constructed by arranging the sound sources on the left and right channel, as well as by their temporal distribution over the track. Whereas the accompanying

**Figure 2.** Isaac Hayes, theme from *Shaft*, temporal distribution of the instrumental patterns according to stereo panning (left/centre/right are depicted in the diagram as top/center/bottom).



parts (drums, piano and bass) are in the centre of the sound-box, other instruments are panned alternatively on the left and on the right, so as to construct a sound that gradually 'embraces' the listener. This gradual inclusion within the soundscape constructed by the track, together with the structural use of short melodic and harmonic patterns that makes clear right from the start how the music is constructed, can be interpreted as part of a strategy whose goal is to clearly expose its basic compositional elements, at the same time using them to build a space where the phonographic 'performers' and the listeners are both included.

After the first electric guitar begins to play the main groove clearly on the left at 00'03", the introduction of the flutes in bar 14 (00'26") is positioned on the opposite side of the stereo image. The latter is then substituted by the second guitar, strumming open fifths from bar 16 onwards (again on the right), while the trumpets are placed on the left (bar 22 – 00'41") and the trombones – together with a second flute part – on the right speaker (bar 28 – 00'55"; b. 30 – 00'59"). We can see how each part is carefully located in order to gain its singular individuality (as can be seen in their development from a metrical, hypermetrical and harmonic point of view), but each part is also conceived as an organic element in a global project, where the tension between individual and collective identification is mutually reinforced by the characteristic of the track in terms of its musical structure and phonographical *mise en scène*. Together with the antiphonal logic, which specifically points to an African-American audience, the concept of multipart music works here as a definition of the work made in the studio, as it un-

derlines its crucial role in representing a human collectivity acting in a coordinated way in this particular recording.

### 3. A multipart convergence for music studies?

The theme from *Shaft* has proved to be a remarkably significant example in testing how the basic theoretical assumptions implied in the concept of multipart music can have a positive impact on the study and analysis of a popular music track. I chose that particular tune precisely for its hybrid nature: as the soundtrack for the opening credits of a Black oriented movie, we can reasonably assume that it aimed at including musical features belonging to styles that were recognized by its target audience as their own. At the same time it is part of a multimedia complex, in which the connotations involved in the production of meanings triggered by sound – and the lyrics in which Isaac Hayes praises the many merits of John Shaft – lead to identifying the central visual character as the paramount model of the proud, smart and streetwise Black American male at the beginning of the 1970s (Henry 2004). The social interaction called for by the definition of multipart music, with its corollary that the symbolic logic organizing musical performance can also be part of a larger system of thought and beliefs regarding a collective social formation, can be seen at work here in processes related to audience identification and the social uses of a cultural artifact. In this respect the connection between structure and culture implied in the concept is also not so far from the 'telescoping' proposed by Adam Krimm as a conceptual tool that allows us

to sort through the social relations, the built environment, and the urban ethos, constantly shifting those levels as ground to figure, then figure to ground, and always with the idea that all the shifting perspectives are retained in a larger, and fully relational, picture (Krims 2003: 151).

Certainly we cannot assume that the author, performers and producers of the *Shaft* soundtrack were consciously attempting to create those kind of relationships between structure and society; nevertheless the success of the film at the time, its historical relevance and enduring heritage (recently confirmed in the 2000 sequel to the film in which Samuel L. Jackson plays a character who is the nephew of the former John Shaft, with the original actor Richard Roundtree involved in a cameo role) provide evidence of the deep effect the film still has today on its viewers.<sup>15</sup> In the words of Richard Dyer, *Shaft's* opening sequence is one of the paramount expressions of the connection between the character of the Black detective and the urban environment he lives in, above all for its exceptional technical qualities:

No other blaxploitation credits or street sequence surpasses this in terms of production values – that is city-centre location shooting, high-tech multi-layered soundtrack and the precision of its matches with the visuals. Probably none even comes near [...]. Nor are many sequences a direct imitation of it. Rather, it stands as the now most widely remembered, most technically polished variation of this type of sequence (Dyer 2012: 161).

A further argument supporting the exceptional nature of this sequence is also provided by a reading of its musical structures informed by the concept of multipart music, as this emphasizes the extent to which the idea of a community, or the imagination of it (Anderson 1983), can be a fulcrum around which the structural and stylistic features of such a cultural product gravitate. In such a context, the close relationship this sequence establishes between the Black protagonist and his environment in visual terms can also

be mirrored in the features of its musical construction. The 'otherness' of the compositional logic underlined in the analysis of the theme from *Shaft* – the use of modular patterns, layering, open form – has its ideal counterpart in the values most commonly associated with the paradigm of the European, Anglo-American white concept of musical production and reception, such as the use of sectional periodic forms, melodic development, functional orchestration of the parts. This leads to a set of oppositions such as 'dancing versus listening' as the main social use of music, 'groove-based versus sectional' forms, 'participatory versus individual' modes of music-making, 'inclusive versus exclusive' constructions of the relational space of the recorded track, which repeatedly emerged in the analysis of the track.

From the point of view of musical construction, vocal and instrumental parts participate in the final result by following the same underlying principles, in the first place with the reference to a shared temporal grid to which they conform according to certain stylistic features pertaining to Black contemporary styles. Such an ideal, genre-based collaborative effort is best exemplified by the transition between the first and second sections of the theme from *Shaft* – where the drastic change of the melodic parts against the unchanged groove demonstrates the potential plasticity of its compositional elements during the performance and its readiness to take different forms in due course. Secondly, words add another level of signification: they have a denotative value that reacts with the already connoted level of musical structure. We have previously considered musical structure in relational terms,<sup>16</sup> and the lyrics add another level of negotiation between subject and object typical of the reception of all cultural works. The focus, which the concept of multipart music implies, on the behavioral process behind the production of music is important because it claims such a relational, interactive matrix as an organic part of the cultural artifact, alongside the existence of a common, and often implicit, level of meaning production shared by all the participants in a collective aesthetic experience. In the

<sup>15</sup> John Singleton, *Shaft*, US, Paramount Pictures, 2000. The original film was followed by two other feature films (Gordon Parks, *Shaft's Big Score*, US, MGM, 1972; John Guillermin, *Shaft in Africa*, US, MGM, 1973) and by a television series for CBS (1973–1974), also starring Roundtree in the role of the detective.

<sup>16</sup> On the likely outcomes of the 'relational turn' in the disciplines related to music studies, see Born (2010) and Cook (2012).

specific case of recorded popular music as a set of musical practices gravitating around mediatisation, the significance of the multipart perspective is even stronger for the moment of reception because it extends the process of meaning production beyond the limits of the here and now of the performance. The community involved in the act of producing music – since the moment of music production is, seen from such a theoretical lens, no longer restricted to the musicians, but also includes the audience that participates in the performative event – can now be equated with all the listeners of a given record, despite their eventual non-connectedness in space and time, not to mention their remoteness from the musicians, authors and producers.

Obviously all the listeners of a record do not constitute a factual community, but they are people sharing an aesthetic experience. Their common belonging is provided precisely by what unites them: a mass-distributed and reproducible artifact that contains the same information and content in every copy. From this point of view the recent turn in popular music analysis towards ecological, cognitive-oriented post-structuralist approaches – taking into account the plurality of meanings associated with recorded music, considering listening as an active process of meaning construction, as well as accounting for the plurality of parameters and behavior associated with its technical production (Moore 2012b; Zagorski-Thomas 2014) – confirms the timeliness of our discussion of multipart music across the boundaries of a single musical repertoire. With regard to such a vision of analysis, in the words of Allan Moore:

At the root of its underpinning is the interpretative aesthetic offered by Paul Ricoeur, who argues that the interpretation of a text can, indeed must, engage with neither authorial intention nor the life experience of its original addressees: “What is indeed to be understood [...] is the meaning of the text itself, conceived in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text [...] the disclosure of a possible way of doing things, which is the

genuine referential power of the text [...]” (Moore 2012b).<sup>17</sup>

If multipart music can become a theoretical framework capable of including such a shift from the musical and social to the symbolic domain of representation, then its extent can grow dramatically and could perhaps affect the field of music studies at large.

As I have tried to sketch out in this preliminary discussion, the relevance of the concept is particularly strong with respect to music theory, its scope and aims, and it is consistent with some previously expressed views of music as the ‘embodying’ cross-domain of different domains of representation (verbal, visual, emotional, physical/motoric, social) (Tagg 2012: 417–484).<sup>18</sup> It makes it possible to go beyond a view of analysis as the dissection of an object and a process leading to a specific interpretation, configuring rather this field of study as the reconstruction of the complexity of cultural products and their signification processes. Analysis can thus be situated in some middle ground between theory and practice only if it acknowledges its own limits, i.e. the impossibility of a complete reconstruction, as well as the need to rely on an ever-expanding set of conceptual and practical tools. Such an issue emerges with special force when we have to deal with musical objects that are recorded forms of performative events, regardless of their status as a genuine witness of an event – as in ethnographically oriented research – or phonographic works – as in popular music studies.

In closing my paper, and thinking about the possible developments of further discussion, I wonder – in my position as a partial outsider to the field and as a grateful guest at the ICTM (International Council for Traditional Music) Study Group for Multipart Music – if multipart music can be thought of as a conceptual matrix to approach different repertoires as cultural practices with some common features such as:

- the reference to a performative root at the core of the objects witnessed in a recorded or audiovisual support. The consideration of a recorded

<sup>17</sup> The quotation is from Ricoeur (1976: 92).

<sup>18</sup> In particular, Tagg talks about the relevance of “concerted simultaneity” (which implies social organization) in music which, as well as “social anaphones” (composites of strands and layers of music), can be related to the idea of multipart music. What the latter idea has with respect to such definitions is to move the focus on to the moment of music-making, rather than seeing them from the point of view of the reception of a cultural object.

artifact as a performative utterance specifically constructed and received as an event – albeit virtual – in which performers and an audience are discursively engaged together, is an area that a multipart perspective on music making promises to open up as a fruitful path for future research;

- the presence, in real or virtual terms, of a historically positioned community that involves both the producers and the receivers of a given cultural object, which is collectively performed and made real by the media artifact. The possibility of using the recorded artefacts to imagine the presence of a community dispersed in time and space, connects popular music texts and their context of reception and informs the critical discussion of different genres and styles of music;
- the inclusion of the text and of the relational context in a common framework capable of connecting the structural features of cultural objects within a shared space where musicians and audiences have a mutual role in validating their reciprocal positions, even in an indirect relationship enabled by a mass-produced and reproducible product such as a recorded artefact. The imagination of an environment in which both the instances of producers and receivers of a cultural product are included defines the record as a site for negotiation

between different actors, whose relative positions and power relationships are shaped by the choices made in the long compositional process that starts with the recording in the studio and ends with the mastering phase of post-production.

This would broaden the scope of the definition of multipart music towards a sort of ‘multipart paradigm’, including not only popular music, but also other relevant issues in contemporary music studies. Some examples are the analysis of recorded art music, of film music as a cultural practice that could be treated as a historical document, or of the changing tradition of early music performance in the course of the 20th century. What all these topics have in common is that they address music as a kind of relational practice whose centre is not, paradoxically, the music itself, but a larger picture where sounds are the catalyst for a historically situated set of negotiations involving social relationships, technological procedures, aesthetic values and technical aspects. This not only calls for a renewed consideration of the relative position of music within society and culture, but could also set the agenda for our future research in a convergence between different branches of scholarly disciplines, allowing common problems to emerge and overcome the dangers of narrow focus and specialism.

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## Salvestise suhestuslike ruumide järgedel: *multipart*-vaatenurk levimuusika analüüsis<sup>1</sup>

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Mõttevahetus selle üle, kas mõiste *multipart music* võiks pakkuda usaldusväärset teoreetilist raamistikku salvestatud levimuusika uurimiseks ja analüüsiks, muutub konstruktiivseks, kui see viib teistsuguse ja ühtsustatud arusaamani salvestise mõnedest struktuurilistest ja kuudelimest organiseeritusaspektidest. Austusega traditsioonilise muusika vastu, mille tarbeks *multipart-music*-kontseptsioon kõigepealt välja arendati, nõuab selle kontseptsiooni rakendamine teistsuguses muusikaproduktiooni ja -retseptsiooni kontekstis mõnegi metodoloogilise ja distsiplinaarse komistuskivi käsitlemist. Nende üle arutletakse artikli teises peatükis. Teksti esimeses peatükis tahan lühidalt toonitada, miks võiks katsetus kasutada seda kontseptsiooni levimuusika analüüsi teoreetilise arsenalina osana lisada uue vaatenurga struktuurilise ja tähendusloomelise seose mõtestamisele salvestatud palade retseptsioonis.

Haarates ühte ja samasse määratluse muusikalise objekti struktuurilised, esituslikud ja suhteseoslikud osised, suunab omadussõna *multipart* vaatama muusikategemist kui jagatud praktikat, milles erinevad inimesed osalevad erisugustes rollides ning kus piirid selle vahel, kes laulab või mängib ja kes kuulab, või kes loob tingimused musitseerimistoominguks ja kes musitseerib, on hägused, soosides nii holistlikku lähenemist ühele kultuuripraktikale kogu tema kompleksuses. Tõstes esiplaanile tegevused, millest tulenevad muusikalised väljendused, ning sotsiaalsed interaktsioonid, mis on seotud nende teokssaamisega, pakub *multipart-music*-kontseptsioon analüütilist maatriksit mõistmaks muusikat kui suhteseoste kogumit – muusikaliste elementide vahel mingis teatud laulus, esitajate vahel, muusikute ja nende publiku vahel.

Ühtlasi näib *multipart*-vaatenurga kaudu defineeritud võrgustik paljutöötava vahendina katses lähendada pingelisi vaidlusi levimuusika-uurijate rahvusvahelises kogukonnas, milles sotsioloogilised, kultuurilised ja tekstilised lähenemisviisid ikka veel vastastikuse tunnustamise pärast võitlevad. Järgnevas visandan kõigepealt *multipart*-muusikategemise kontseptsiooni kasutamise teoreetilise ulatuse ja pragmaatilise tähtsuse analüütilises lähenemises salvestatud levimuusikale, eriti mis puudutab tolle üksik- osade organiseeritust üheks terviklikuks tajuobjektiks, mida kujundavad teatud kindlad struktuurilised ja kuudelised karakteristikud. Seejärel arutlen, kuidas kasutada seesugust abstraktset paradigmat filmi „Shaft“ algusmuusika (looja, esitaja, salvestaja ja produtsent Isaac Hayes) tähenduslikkuse käsitlemisel kontekstis, kus lugude muusikalised omadused on tõlgendatavad kui osa ruumiliste ja protsessuaalsete suhteseoste representatsioonist, milles salvestatud muusika paigutab nii esitaja kui tema kuulajad jagatud – kuigi virtuaalse – sündmuse raamistikku.

*Multipart-music*-kontseptsiooni paindlikkus on kahtlemata lisaväärtus: olles vähem kontekstispetsiifiline kui näiteks mõisted „polüfoonia“, „heterofoonia“ jms., saab seda vabalt rakendada erinevatele muusikapraktikatele. Minu analüüsi keskne hüpotees on, et salvestatud lugude produktiooniga seotud suhestusliku, sotsiokultuurilise võrgustiku põhjalik käsitlus võib – eeldusel, et neid peetakse (vähemalt sümboliliselt) salvestatud artefaktidena loodud performatiivse sündmuse osaks – heita valgust tähendusloomeprotsessidele. Seesuguse mõttenihke tulemusel saab *multipart*-vaatenurga keskmes olevat suhestuslikku perspektiivi kasutada selleks, et läheneda salvestisele holistiliselt, ühendades muusika struktuurilised omadused tema mõjuga publikule tähenduslikkuse ja kultuurilise väärtuse mõttes.

<sup>1</sup> Selles resümees nagu ka mõnes teises jäeti termin *multipart music* inglise keelest tõlkimata. See on tingitud selle termini tähenduse ambivalentsusest – ühelt poolt tähendab sõna *part* muusikalist partiid või häält (sel juhul sobiks tavapärase tõlge „mitmehäälsus“), teiselt poolt aga rõhutavad mitmed selle kogumiku autorid (nende hulgas Bratus) sõna *part* sotsiaalset tähendust 'osa, roll'. Viimasel juhul ei väljendaks sõna „mitmehäälsus“ autorite mõtet adekvaatselt, uute eestikeelsete terminite leiutamine ei ole aga toimetuse pädevuses. (Toim.)