



## Introduction to Panorama of Music Theory, 1987–97

Robert Morris



KEYWORDS: plenary session

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[1] When I was asked by Thomas Christensen to participate in this plenary session, my first inclination was to review and celebrate the published work of the last decade in the fields of music theory to which I have contributed. But as I thought through the last ten years, I reminded myself that half of my contributions to music have been in composition and that my interests and attitudes, both musical and academic, have broadened in ways I could not have predicted in 1987. So, for a while, I was at a loss to know how to respond. After further reflection, I realized that I should compose some music for this session rather than present a paper. Actually, my decision does reflect an important and recent direction in musical scholarship: the emphasis upon musical experience, in all its guises and disguises, either in opposition to, or in cooperation with, the ongoing study of musical structure. Besides, music theory scholarship and pedagogy has been a major influence on my compositional poetics, and I have been worried that the present-day separation of composition from theory and analysis in many academic institutions may have gone too far.

[2] I found I wanted to express in music the sense of wonder at the rich, deep, provocative, and often beautiful insights, thoughts, and conceptions that I had encountered in music-theory writings of the last ten years. So, after reviewing the literature, I selected 35 quotations, one per author, to be read over a specially designed musical fabric of slowly evolving harmony. The order of the quotations was chosen for aesthetic reasons and does not consciously reflect any bias or prominence of interest on my part. The limitation to culling relatively short quotations that suggest issues rather than documenting results or reviewing detailed and subtle reasoning eliminated more than many important contributions. But perhaps the other speakers will discuss such texts.

[3] With some trepidation, I have provided a handout to accompany your listening to my piece, if you so desire. Let me assure you the handout is not a necessary part of this presentation; nevertheless, let us look at it for a moment. The list under the heading in bold-face: "Order of Authors" lists the authors of the quotations in order of appearance in my piece; a series of asterisks indicates a short section of music without text. When listening to the piece, those of you who are immediately curious about who wrote a text you hear can find out by glancing at the list but without losing your concentration on the music of words and sounds. Of course, others of you may enjoy not knowing the identity of the authors until the piece is over. In any case, the reverse side of the handout provides a bibliography for the quotes.

[4] The composition is in 50 sections, 35 of which have texts. The numbers 35 and 50 might suggest to some of you

something about the structure of the piece. In any case, there are connections between the music-sound and the texts, some of which are obvious and perhaps amusing. The sounds were generated in my own computer music set-up at home, then transported to one of the computer music studios at the Eastman School of Music, where they were mixed in stereo with the texts. I am very grateful to the five readers: Gavin Chuck, Ellen Koskoff, Elizabeth West Marvin, Thomas Paul, and Kala Pierson.

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Panorama of Music Theory, 1987-97

by

Robert (D.) Morris

in celebration of The Society of Music Theory's 20th Anniversary

Voices of Gavin Chuck, Ellen Koskoff, Elizabeth West Marvin,  
Thomas Paul, Kala Pierson

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This composition has 50 sections, 35 of which have texts. The following "Order of Authors" lists the authors of the texts in order of occurrence. (See below for exact citations.)

[Panorama.mp3](#) [17.3Mb]

Order of Authors:

("\* \* \* \*") indicates a section without text)

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Jonathan Kramer

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Joseph Dubiel

Stephen Peles

Ed Sarath

Eugene Narmour

Brian Hyer

Joseph N. Straus

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John Roeder

Joel Galand

\* \* \* \* \*

Larry Polansky and Richard S. Bassein

\* \* \* \* \*

William Rothstein  
Rosemary N. Killam  
Kate Covington and Charles H. Lord

\* \* \* \* \*

Michael L. Friedmann

\* \* \* \* \*

Matthew Brown and Douglas J. Dempster  
Daniel Harrison

\* \* \* \* \*

Marion Guck  
Richard Cohn  
Elaine Barkin

\* \* \* \* \*

Norman Carey and David Clampitt

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\* \* \* \* \*

Elizabeth West Marvin and Robert W. Wason  
John Rahn  
Peter Westergaard

\* \* \* \* \*

Stephen Soderberg

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

Benjamin Boretz

\* \* \* \* \*

Kevin Korsyn  
Steven Block  
Kofi Agawu  
Diana Deutsch

John Clough, Jack Douthett, N. Ramanathan, and Lewis Rowell  
Suzanne G. Cusick  
Jonathan W. Bernard  
Andrew Mead

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Iannis Xenakis  
Arthur Komar

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The computer-generated sounds and voices were mixed in the Computer Music Studios of the Eastman School of Music, August 1–3, 1997.

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