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MTO 27.2 Examples: Schumann, Asymmetrical Meter, Ostinati, and Cycles in the Music of Tigran Hamasyan

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

<https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.21.27.2/mto.21.27.2.schumann.html>

Example 1. “Drip”—Track 4 on *Shadow Theater* (2013). Incomplete cycle at 1:32–1:58.

Layer 1: 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4
Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

System 1 (Measures 1-4):
 Vocals/Piano: E sor urbat' e pas e De', he', zy' ngy, zy' ngy, de', he', jan,
 Intervals: 5 +2 2 0
 Piano/Bass: (5/4) 8:5 8:5 8:5
 Cymbal/Snare/Kick: 8:5 8:5 8:5 8:5

System 2 (Measures 5-8):
 Vocals/Piano: Syr tik art sat' e t'as e De', he', zy' ngy, zy' ngy, de', he', jan,
 Intervals: 4 +5 8
 Piano/Bass: 8:5 8:5 8:5
 Cymbal/Snare/Kick: 8:5 8:5 8:5 8:5

Cycle Disrupted

Jur kuga verin saren,
 Saren olorelen,
 Kyt'ap'i marmar k'aren,
 Kat'-kat' tsorelen

Esor urbat' e pas e
 De', he', zy' ngy, zy' ngy, de', he', jan,
 Syrtik artsat' e t'as e
 De', he', zy' ngy, zy' ngy, de', he', jan,

The water comes (down) from the mountain above.
 From the ice it flows
 It pours from the marble stone
 Drop by drop it runs

Today is Friday, a fasting day
 Ding Ding, hey, my friend
 Your heart is like a silver cup
 Ding Ding, hey, my friend¹

¹ Translation provided by Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, Pastor Emeritus St. Mesrob Armenian Church; Racine, WI (2/8/2019). Thanks to Joshua Albrecht (Kent State University) for helping me obtain this translation.

Example 2. Form Diagram for “Drip” —Track 4 on *Shadow Theater* (2013)

Section	Intro	A	B	A	B	C	A	D	E	F	G	A'	G
# Bars	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	8	12	8	8	4	8
Layer 1	4/4												
Layer 2								5/4 (8:5)					
Time	0:00– 0:13	0:13– 0:26	0:26– 0:39	0:39– 0:52	0:52– 1:06	1:06– 1:19	1:19– 1:32	1:32– 1:58	1:58– 2:38	2:38– 3:04	3:04– 3:30	3:30– 3:43	3:43– 4:13

Example 3. List of studio albums featuring Hamasyan as the primary artist/composer/arranger

Album Title	Year	Label
<i>World Passion</i>	2006	Plus Loins Music
<i>New Era</i>	2007	Plus Loins Music
<i>Red Hail</i>	2009	Plus Loins Music
<i>A Fable</i>	2011	Verve Records
<i>EP No. 1</i>	2011	Verve Records
<i>Shadow Theater</i>	2013	Verve Records
<i>The Poet</i>	2014	Sunnyside Records
<i>Mockroot</i>	2015	Nonesuch Records
<i>Luys i Loso</i>	2015	ECM Records
<i>An Ancient Observer</i>	2017	Nonesuch Records
<i>For Gyumri</i>	2018	Nonesuch Records
<i>They Say Nothing Stays The Same</i>	2019	SEEBEDON Records
<i>The Call Within</i>	2020	Nonesuch Records

Example 4. Known instances of cycle types in Hamasyan's studio albums

Album (Year)	Track #/Title	Cycle Type
<i>Red Hail</i> (2009)	#2: "Red Hail (of Pomegranate Seeds)"	Structural
	#3: "The Glass-Hearted Queen"	Developmental
	#6: "Sibylla"	Phrasal
	#7: "Corrupt"	Structural
	#8/#9 "Part 1: Serpentine"/"Part 2: Money pulsed"	Developmental
<i>A Fable</i> (2011)	#2: "What The Waves Brought"	Phrasal
	#5: "Samsara"	Phrasal
	#10: "Kakavik (The Little Partridge)"	Phrasal
	#12: "A Fable"	Phrasal
	#14: "Looking For The Block"	Phrasal
<i>EP No. 1</i> (2011)	#3: "A Crane From Van"	Phrasal
	#5: "Vardavar"	Developmental
<i>Shadow Theater</i> (2013)	#1: "The Poet"	Phrasal
	#2: "Erishta"	Developmental
	#4: "Drip"	Phrasal
	#7: "The Court Jester"	Phrasal
	#9/#10: "Pt1 Collapse"/"Pt2 Alternative Universe"	Developmental
	#12: "Road Song"	Phrasal
<i>Mockroot</i> (2015)	#2: "Song for Melan and Rafik"	Phrasal
	#3: "Kars 1"	Phrasal
	#4: "Double-Faced"	Structural
	#7: "Entertain Me"	Structural
	#10: "To Negate"	Phrasal
	#11/#12: "The Grid"/"Out of the Grid"	Developmental
<i>Luys I Loso</i> (2015)	#10: "Voghormea Indz Astvats"	Phrasal
<i>An Ancient Observer</i> (2017)	#4: "Nairian Odyssey"	Phrasal
	#6: "Etude No. 1"	Structural
	#8: "Fides Tua"	Phrasal
	#10: "An Ancient Observer"	Phrasal
<i>For Gyumri</i> (2018)	#3: "The American"	Phrasal
	#4: "Self - Portrait"	Phrasal
<i>The Call Within</i> (2020)	#1: "Levitation 21"	Phrasal
	#3: "Ara Resurrected"	Structural
	#5: "Space of Your Existence"	Phrasal
	#8: "Vortex"	Phrasal
	#10: "New Maps"	Developmental

Example 5. Form Diagram for “Song for Melan and Rafik” —Track 2 on *Mockroot* (2015)

Section	Intro	A	B	C	D	E	D'	D''	D'''	F
# Bars	16	64	16	40	80	64	64	32	32	52
Layer 1	5/8+5/8+5/8+5/8+5/8+5/8+5/8+7/8									12/8+12/8+12/8+14/8
Layer 2								12/8	4/8 & 3/8	
Time	0:00–0:10	0:10–0:53	0:53–1:04	1:04–1:31	1:31–2:21	2:21–3:02	3:02–3:44	3:44–4:05	4:05–4:25	4:25–5:57

Example 6. “Song for Melan and Rafik” —Track 2 on *Mockroot* (2015). Complete cycle at 3:44–4:05.

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 3 1 2 3 4 1 6 2 3 4 8 1 2

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 3 1 2 3 4 1 6 2 3 4 8 1 2

Piano Bass $\text{♩} = 160$

Cymbal Snare Kick

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 3 1 2 3 4 1 6 2 3 4 8 1 2

Layer 2: 3 4 2 1 2 3 4 1 5 2 3 6 4 1 2 3 4

Piano Bass

Cymbal Snare Kick

Layer 2 displaced by two dotted quarter notes

Example 7. “Song for Melan and Rafik” —Track 2 on *Mockroot* (2015). Complete cycles at 4:05–4:25.

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Piano Bass $\text{♩} = 160$

Cymbal Snare Kick

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Piano Bass

Cymbal Snare Kick

3x

Example 8. Form Diagram for “A Crane Came From Van” —Track 3 on *EP No. 1* (2011)

Section	Intro	A	B	A'	A''	C	C'	D	E
# Bars	40	80	40	20	30	24	24	60	12
Layer 1	5/16+5/16+5/16+4/16+5/16					6/16+6/16+7/16			7/4+9/4
Layer 2				4/16			4/16		
Time	0:00–0:20	0:20–1:00	1:00–1:20	1:20–1:30	1:30–1:45	1:45–2:03	2:03–2:21	2:22–3:05	3:05–3:59

Example 9. “A Crane Came From Van” —Track 3 on *EP No. 1* (2011). Incomplete cycle at 2:03–2:21

Layer 1: 1 2 2 3 3 1 1 2 3 2 3 1 2
Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 3 1 2

♩ = 120 (4)

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

Layer 1: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 3*
Layer 2: 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3

Cycle Disrupted

Example 10. Form Diagram for “Entertain Me” — Track 7 on *Mockroot* (2015)

Section	A	B	C	C'	C	A	Outro
# Bars (4/4)	32	16	16	8	8	16	8
Layer 1	20/16+15/16						
Layer 2	4/4						
Time	0:00–0:59	0:59–1:28	1:28–1:58	1:58–2:13	2:13–2:28	2:28–2:57	2:57–3:20

Example 11. “Entertain Me” —Track 7 on *Mockroot* (2015). Incomplete cycle at 0:00–0:59

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5
 Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

$\text{♩} = 140$

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5 2
 Layer 2: 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5 3
 Layer 2: 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

The image displays a musical score for the track "Entertain Me" from the album Mockroot (2015). It consists of three systems of music, each featuring piano and percussion parts. The tempo is marked as 140 beats per minute. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 20/16. The score is divided into three systems, each with its own set of layer counts. The first system has Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5 and Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1. The second system has Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5 2 and Layer 2: 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2. The third system has Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5 3 and Layer 2: 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3. The piano parts are written in treble and bass staves, while the percussion parts (Cymbal, Snare, Kick) are written on a single staff with a double bar line at the beginning. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and rests, as well as dynamic markings like piano (p) and accents.

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5
 Layer 2: 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

Both layers realign, but the downbeat of layer 1 now coincides with beat 4 of layer 2

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5
 Layer 2: 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5
 Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5 2
 Layer 2: 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

Layer 1: 1 2* Cycle Disrupted
 Layer 2: 3 4

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal
Snare
Kick

Example 12. Form Diagram for “Etude No. 1” —Track 6 on *An Ancient Observer* (2017)

Section	A	B	A	B'	B''	B'''	A	C	A
# Bars	8	40	4	32	16	24	4	32	8
Layer 1	5/8								
Layer 2		7/8		7/8					
Layer 3					3/8				
Time	0:00–0:05	0:05–0:36	0:36–0:39	0:39–0:51	0:51–1:04	1:04–1:23	1:23–1:27	1:27–1:53	1:53–2:08

Example 13. “Etude No. 1” —Track 6 on *An Ancient Observer* (2017). Layer 1 introduced at 0:00.

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4

$\text{♩} = 200$

Piano

Example 14. “Etude No. 1” —Track 6 on *An Ancient Observer* (2017). Incomplete cycle at 0:05–0:36.

Layer 2: 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
Layer 1: 1 1 2 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 2

$\text{♩} = 200$

Piano

Intervals: 3 3 0 2 4 0 0 4 8 0 3 7 5 3 4 5

Layer 2: 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2

Pno.

0 8 4 0 0 4 2 0 3 6 5 2 3 5 0 3

Layer 2: 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2

Pno.

4 0 0 3 8 0 4 8 5 8 3 4 0 3 5 0

Layer 2: 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2

Pno.

0 2 8 0 3 8 6 3 3 3 0 2 4 0 0 4

Layer 2: 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2

Pno.

8 0 3 7 5 3 4 5 0 8 4 0 0 4 2 0 3

2* Cycle Disrupted

Example 15. “Etude No. 1” —Track 6 on *An Ancient Observer* (2017). Incomplete cycle at 0:51–1:04.

Layer 2': 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2
Layer 3: 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

$\text{♩} = 200$

Piano

85

Layer 3

Layer 2': 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1* Cycle Disrupted
Layer 3: 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1*
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

Pno.

93

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with fingerings indicated above the notes. The first system starts at measure 85 and includes a tempo marking of quarter note = 200. The second system starts at measure 93. Above the first system, three layers of fingerings are listed: Layer 2' (1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2), Layer 3 (1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1), and Layer 1 (1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1). Above the second system, similar fingerings are listed, but Layer 2' ends with '1* Cycle Disrupted' and Layer 3 ends with '1*' at the final measure.

Example 16. “Etude No. 1” —Track 6 on *An Ancient Observer* (2017). Complete cycle at 1:04–1:23.

Layer 3': 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 1

$\text{♩} = 200$
101

Piano

109

Pno.

117

Pno.

Layer 3': 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 (1)
Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

The image displays three systems of musical notation for 'Etude No. 1'. Each system consists of a piano (Piano or Pno.) part and a piano-noise (Pno.) part. The piano parts are written in treble clef with a 3/8 time signature, featuring complex rhythmic patterns and fingerings (1-4). The piano-noise parts are written in bass clef with a 3/8 time signature, featuring simpler rhythmic patterns and fingerings (1-4). The first system is labeled 'Piano' and the second and third systems are labeled 'Pno.'. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 200$. The measures are numbered 101, 109, and 117. The fingerings for Layer 3' and Layer 1 are indicated above the notes.

Example 17. Form Diagram for “Vardavar” —Track 5 on *EP No. 1* (2011).

Section	A	A	A	B	A	C	A'	A	A''
# Bars	56	112	56	42	56	70	28	84	126 (fade out)
Layer 1	5/16+5/16+3/16+5/16+5/16+4/16+5/16								3/16+3/16+2/16+3/16+3/16+2.5/16+1.5/16
Layer 2							4/4		2/4
Time	0:00–0:28	0:28–1:22	1:22–1:50	1:50–2:11	2:11–2:38	2:38–3:12	3:12–3:26	3:26–4:07	4:07–5:09

Example 18. “Vardavar” —Track 5 on *EP No. 1* (2011). Layer 1 at 0:00–0:28.

Layer 1: 1 2 3 1 2 3 4

$\text{♩} = 140$

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbal

Snare

Kick

Example 19. “Vardavar” —Track 5 on *EP No. 1* (2011). Complete Cycle at 3:12–3:26.

Layer 1: 5/16 5/16 3/16 5/16 5/16 4/16 5/16

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

$\text{♩} = 140$

Piano Bass

Cymbal

Snare

Kick

Example 20. “Vardavar” —Track 5 on *EP No. 1* (2011). Complete Cycle at 4:07–5:09.

Original layer divisions transformed,
but 3 + 4 phrase structure retained

Layer 1: 3/16 3/16 2/16 3/16 3/16 2.5/16 3.5/16 | 3/16 3/16 2/16 3/16 3/16 2.5/16 3.5/16
Layer 2: 1 2 3 | 1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 | 1 2 3 4

Layer 1 repeats starting
on beat 2 of Layer 2

Layer 1: 3/16 3/16 2/16 3/16 3/16 2.5/16 3.5/16
Layer 2: 2 1 3 | 2 1 2

Piano Bass

Cymbals Snare Kick

Example 21. Development of original layer 1 in “Vardavar.”

5 5 3 5 5 4 5

0:00' 5/16 3/16 3/16 2/16 3/16 2.5/16 3.5/16

(against 4)

3:12' 5 5 3 5 5 4 5

5 5 3 5 5 4 5

Diminution of original:

(against 2)

4:07' 3 3 2 3 3 2.5 3.5

3 3 2 3 3 2.5 3.5

Example 22. Form Diagram for “The Grid” & “Out of The Grid” — Tracks 11 & 12 on *Mockroot* (2015).

“The Grid”

Section	A	B	C	B	C	A	D	E	F	Tr	Solo	G	H
# Bars	60	24	24	24	24	24	48	24	48	12	204	24	48
Layer 1	5/16+5/16+7/16+5/16+5/16+5/16												
Time	0:00–0:35	0:35–0:50	0:50–1:05	1:05–1:20	1:20–1:34	1:34–1:48	1:48–2:17	2:17–2:32	2:32–3:00	3:00–3:08	3:08–5:10	5:10–5:25	5:25–5:57

“Out of the Grid”

Section	I	J	K	A	A'	L	A''	A	A	M	A	N	M
# Bars	24	48	60	36	30	20	47	15	60	24	24	24	12
Layer 1	5/16+5/16+7/16+5/16+5/16+5/16				4/16+4/16+5/16+4/16+4/16+4/16			5/16+5/16+7/16+5/16+5/16+5/16					
Layer 2					5/16		4/16						
Time	0:00–0:14	0:14–0:47	0:47–1:19	1:19–1:43	1:43–2:08		2:08–2:25	2:25–2:56	2:56–3:06	3:06–3:44	3:44–3:59	3:59–4:14	4:14–4:30–4:39

Example 23. “The Grid” — Track 11 on *Mockroot* (2015). Layer 1 at 0:00–0:35.

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6

♩ = 135

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

Melodic outline

Example 24. “Out of The Grid” —Track 12 on *Mockroot* (2015). Complete Cycle at 1:43–2:08.

Original layer divisions transformed, but 6 bar phrase structure retained (still w/ larger cardinality in bar 3)

4/16 4/16 5/16 4/16 4/16 4/16

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 5

♩ = 90

Intervals: 8

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

4/16 4/16 5/16 4/16 4/16 4/16

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Layer 2: 6 1 2 3 4

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

4/16 4/16 5/16 4/16 4/16 4/16

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Layer 2: 5 6 1 2 3

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

Both layers realign, but the downbeat of layer 1 now coincides with beat 4 of layer 2

	4/16	4/16	5/16	4/16	4/16	4/16
Layer 1:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Layer 2:	4	5	6	1	2	

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

	4/16	4/16	5/16	4/16	4/16	4/16
Layer 1:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Layer 2:	3	4	5	6	1	

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

	4/16	4/16	5/16	4/16	4/16	4/16
Layer 1:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Layer 2:	2	3	4	5	6	1

Piano

Piano Bass

Cymbals

Snare

Kick

Example 25. “Out of The Grid” — Track 12 on *Mockroot* (2015). Incomplete Cycle at 2:25–2:56.

4/16 4/16 5/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16

Layer 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

♩ = 90

Piano
Bass

Cymbals
Snare
Kick

5/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 5/16 4/16

Layer 1: 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Piano
Bass

Cymbals
Snare
Kick

4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 5/16 4/16 4/16

Layer 1: 5 6 1 2 3 4 5

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Piano
Bass

Cymbals
Snare
Kick

Both layers realign, but the downbeat of layer 1 now coincides with beat 2 of layer 2

4/16 4/16 4/16 5/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16

Layer 1: 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 1

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Piano Bass

Cymbals Snare Kick

4/16 5/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 5/16

Layer 1: 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Piano Bass

Cymbals Snare Kick

4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 4/16 5/16 **Cycle Disrupted**

Layer 1: 4 5 6 1 2 3*

Layer 2: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3*

Piano Bass

Cymbals Snare Kick

Return to original layer 1 content

Layer 1: 4 5 6 1 2 3 4

♩ = 135

Piano Bass

Cymbals Snare Kick

Layer 1: 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6

Piano Bass

Cymbals Snare Kick

Example 26. Development of original layer 1 in "The Grid"/"Out of The Grid."

5 5 7 5 5 5

"The Grid" 0:00

Diminution
of original:

4 4 5 4 4 4

(against 5)
"Out of the Grid" 1:43'

4 4 5 4 4 4

(against 4)
"Out of the Grid" 2:25'