



Commentary on Neumeyer's MTO 0.1 essay

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REFERENCE: mto.93.0.1.neumeyer.php

[1] Just a quick reaction to Robert Judd's comments about David Neumeyer's "Schoenberg at the Movies." While several of his points are pertinent (e.g., on aesthetics and cognition), the issue of opera composition doesn't seem particularly relevant. I find a rather substantial genre-gap between opera music and film music (a notable exception being musicals). A film score generally acts as a gloss on the drama, hence the possibility of Neumeyer's commutation tests, while an opera score is a musical version of the drama. (Just listen to Schoenberg's Op. 34 on your headphones next time you enjoy a performance of Salome to test this.) I don't mean to downplay the significance of the relationship between drama and music in either genre, but the two perspectives are remarkably different and therefore merit distinct treatment regarding aesthetic, cognitive, and analytic issues. The contrast between the performance orientation of opera music and the artificial soundspace (created by modern recording technology) of more recent film music further separates these two genres.

[2] In reference to the "tinsel" question: I say it's all music, from MTV to the concert hall, whether it's Bartok's Fourth Quartet, Coltrane's "Giant Steps," Lennon's "Imagine," or anything else you care to name (Baroque fugue, rap song, etc.). I may be laughably naive, but is there really any need for the continual segregation of the musical world into "cultivated" and "vernacular" traditions?

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