

## **Formal Analysis and Performance Implications for Paul Lansky's *Three Moves for Marimba* (1998)**

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Thorough understanding of musical organization and compositional process contributes positively to crafting a performance. While an audience may only be experiencing a work aurally, and possibly for the first time, logical organization of a work's formal elements will give the listener a more coherent experience, especially with works that do not lie within the confines of common practice tonality. With any interpretation, the performer carries a heavy burden of communicating his or her ideas as clearly as possible, which is much easier said than done. The solo percussionist's toolkit, so to speak, contains a wide array of motions, both coarse and fine, that slightly alter one's tone or the perception thereof. Attention to detail is imperative in deciding how to utilize these motions, as the ability to communicate one's interpretation on a deep level is what may separate good performers from the truly great.

The purpose of the following observations and suggestions is to relate performance techniques to theoretical analyses of Paul Lansky's solo work, *Three Moves for Marimba* (1998), though the same thought processes may and should be applied to music in all other percussive mediums. Thorough knowledge of formal, harmonic, rhythmic and other musical characteristics of a work assists a musician in crafting an effective and informed performance. The following suggestions are by no means meant to inhibit one's artistic individuality, however, but instead present a theoretical template with merely general suggestions on how to proceed musically.

**Paul Lansky: Three Moves for Marimba**

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Lansky's *Three Moves* is that there is clear tonic centricity throughout a majority of each movement. The apparent influence of jazz and popular music is not uncommon, but many works for marimba of similar difficulty, that one would likely see in a solo competition, etc., focus largely on gesture and motive to define form. Some common examples of such pieces include Toshi Ichiyanagi's *The Source*, *Ripple*, by Akira Miyoshi and *Kahn Variations*, by Alejandro Vinao. Many other works contain much stronger tonal implications, but are governed more so by certain non-tonal pitch collections, such as *Merlin*, by Andrew Thomas, *Dances of Earth and Fire*, by Peter Klatzow, and *Velocities*, by Joseph Schwantner.

The performance difficulties that arise from *Three Moves*' tonality are twofold: from a purely technical perspective, pitch accuracy is a struggle, and errors are easily noticeable, while the implementation of popular and jazz harmony means that even first time listeners will have subconscious formal expectations based on music with which they are already familiar. It is imperative that the performer pays extremely close attention to detail when preparing this work, as a listener's ears will pick up on subtler changes in phrasing and formal interpretation than he or she would in a work with a more cryptic harmonic language.

**Movement I:**

The three movements of Lansky's work follow a common fast-slow-fast setup, which each individual movement resembling forms of the common practice era. The first movement, entitled *Hop(2)*, presents a clear ternary form. While this may not be groundbreaking information to most, one must delve deeper to discover the nature of the

large-scale form and decide how to interpret the opening section and its recapitulation.

The first large section, labeled A, lasts from measures 1-28. This stretch of music contains three smaller sections that create a miniature ternary form (*aba'*) within the opening section. While the work opens with a four measure phrase, the phrase structure quickly becomes irregular, as the second phrase seems like a simple embellishment of the first until three more measures added to the end defy the original tonic closure, turning the root position C minor tonic into first inversion. While it is not unheard of to end a phrase in an inverted tonic sonority, the second small section (m. 12) begins with similar music to the first, but in E-flat! The E-flat bass is used as a pivot tone to facilitate a modulation to what would normally be the relative major of C minor, though the second section continues to utilize jazzy, natural minor sonorities. The increased chromaticism throughout the second phrase (mm. 17-18) here hints strongly at a new key area, though the phrase ultimately comes to rest on the same E-flat where it began, leading to a louder, more embellished *a'* in a higher register for the remainder of the opening.

When taking Lansky's formal constructs into consideration during performance, a significant focus should be placed on the overall harmonic rhythm, with the bass notes serving a much stronger purpose than the "melody." The right hand notes are disjunct, with much of the material lacking the smooth connective tissue one would find a melodic line of Mozart. Instead, the phrasing and groove of the piece is governed by the repetitious progressions grounded in the bass. C travels to G and back to C over and over, with interest stemming from the various detours within each gesture. Over the first two measures we see in the bass: C, E-flat, F, G, C, A-flat, B-flat, C. This is a very common bass line in popular music utilizing a minor collection and a flat 7<sup>th</sup> scale degree.

Two interesting variations within the *a* section are the distinct usage of B-natural as a leading tone instead of B-flat in measure 6, beat 4, and in measure 10, where the bass F-sharp and A-flat combine to form the strongest predominant yet, a German augmented sixth chord, right before the unexpected cadence to a first inversion tonic. This is the perfect opportunity for a performer to utilize his or her musical skills to assist the composer in defying the listener's expectations. The variations in bass patterns throughout the *a* section present increasingly stronger tendency tones to the tonic and dominant, with the augmented sixth chord in measure 10 guaranteeing the listener a clear cadence, but instead ending with something weaker. Bringing out this instance will serve to strengthen later cadences on C, such as the end of the movement.

Measures 29-38 make up the middle, or B section, of the movement. This section is much louder and more exciting than anything heard previously, with more varied harmonic rhythm and much smoother melodic material, primarily encompassing a pentatonic collection. The suddenly loud measure 29 serves to prepare the new centricity of A-flat via an E-flat seventh chord in second inversion, or V4/3 in the key of A-flat. With this in mind, it seems appropriate to treat measure 30 as an arrival point for the purpose of phrasing, despite the composer's phrase markings. The harmonic and melodic behavior in the following measures reveals the B section to be one sentence structure of two, two, and five measures. Similarly to the phrases that begin the movement, the two measure subphrases are similar two one another, while the following five "ramble" on the idea with increased chromaticism and embellished melodic material.

The most important element to bring out here in performance is the presence of flowing melodies, as the melodic ideas are disjunct throughout the rest of the movement.

This is extremely difficult due to the physically taxing nature of the music, as well as the interesting moving lines that exist in the bass. By this point the audience will be aware of the bass' interesting accompanimental lines, meaning that the phrasing of the top line deserves close consideration. One may supplement the newfound melodic smoothness by focusing on the relaxed, horizontal sweeping motion of the right hand. While each individual stroke should still have proper form, the coarse motor skills involved offer a slight alteration to the tone one produces. Conversely, the left hand should "dig in" to the bass notes that begin each small moving line. This will allow the contrapuntal properties between the two hands to come out, while still preserving the piece's signature groove and bringing close attention to the section's melodic smoothness.

Measures 39-56 serve as A' of a normal ternary form, but with elements of a sonata form recapitulation. While the opening material is embellished and has more varied harmony, it is clearly the same basic material. The return is abbreviated, however, with shorter small sections and no diversion to E-flat. Instead the three small sections each draw from the same material in C, with varied melodic material growing in intensity each time. The utilization of constant parallel fourths in the right hand is noteworthy, as it makes the disjunct melody far more present and defined than the beginning, offering a worthwhile point of musical focus for the performer. This idea additionally connects A' to the coda, beginning at measure 57, which embellishes the harmonic material for A' in a declamatory fashion, utilizing the B section's contrapuntal texture. By the last few measures, the two hands are playing in parallel octaves, promoting an increase in intensity driving to the end of the movement. This coda can be approached similarly to the B section in regards to how the hands interact, but with a stronger focus on vertical

motion. The performer can harness the smooth sweeping right hand from earlier, while firming it up just enough to make each individual note articulate, but connected. This will especially prove effective in the final two measures, where the natural ring of the bars can cause a lack of definition in subsequent notes. Adding the small emphasis on vertical motion and closely observing the accents will make it abundantly clear to the listener than the movement is over.

#### Movement II:

The second movement follows a ternary form similar to the first, but this time with a larger B section and a very short recapitulation. The A section three smaller subsections: the opening statement of the theme from measures 1-20, a secondary, more developmental theme from measures 21-55, then a restatement of the opening from measures 56-75. Lansky's harmonic language is consistent with the first, staying firmly rooted in the initial tonic of D minor, though his approach is interesting and noteworthy. Throughout the opening of the movement there is a clear four-part chorale texture, pulsed in a consistent triple meter. This is extremely difficult for the performer because the melodic line exists almost exclusively in the alto voice for the opening theme, while the soprano sustains a pedal D. The bass voice supports the melody as expected while the tenor voice adds color tones, often sevenths and ninths (seconds). Making interpretive decisions about the harmonic progression requires one to keep in mind the soprano pedal and that it may skew the sense of harmony when it is a non-chord tone. For instance, in measures 7-8, the bottom three voices form an A major chord in first inversion under the D pedal, which, as a dominant, resolves to the D<sup>9</sup> sonority in the following measure. Trying to shoehorn the pedal D into an analysis of measure 7 will only cause issues, as

the function of the chord is clearly V, despite the presence of D. The pedal tone *does* fit into the resolution in the following measure, though that is merely a product of a pedal tone's nature: to be a part of the sonority by which it was initially introduced.

What this means the performer is that he or she must tackle the challenge of bringing out the melody, keeping the soprano pedal from becoming overbearing, and clearly showing the harmonic interaction between the melody and bass. While this may seem like standard protocol, it is very difficult to control one's right hand to emphasize the inner mallet (alto voice) in this textural context. One possible solution is to simply practice the physical motions required to achieve this: turning the right hand to allow the two mallets to descend from different heights and using a slight turn of the wrist to cause a simultaneous impact, with the inner mallet creating more sound. This is very difficult to consistently achieve, however, especially throughout an entire movement, so an alternative, or perhaps supplemental solution lies in one's mallet choice. For this movement, the hardness of mallet for each of the four positions may be decided based on that mallet's role. The first (bass) mallet will be the softest because of its role and the nature of the instrument, where softer mallets sound better in lower registers, the tenor mallet will be slightly harder, as it is not difficult to bring out the bass when necessary, then the hardest mallet will go in the alto position, with a slightly softer mallet in the soprano. This is irregular, as standard practice is to increase hardness in higher registers for those who choose to use graduated mallets. In this case, the alto voice is so prominent that it warrants the use of an even harder mallet than the soprano, both for bringing attention to the melody and keeping the pedal out of the way. Like with the bass, it is easier to bring out the soprano voice if necessary, as the physical motions

required to strike a bar are much freer for outer mallets when playing blocked chords.

This means that one should have no trouble emphasizing the soprano, even with a softer mallet, when it becomes necessary later in the movement.

The B section's rhythmic content is similar, but not as consistent as the A section. The downbeat of every measure is still a block chord, but the third eighth of each measure is often a single pitch, allowing for the expressive use of suspension or passing tones, creating a more lyrical, contrasting section. Lansky's harmonic choices here are interesting. It begins in the parallel key of D major, which is not clear until the second measure, as Lansky begins with G-sharp and C-sharp leading tones over F-sharp and A, the two pitches connecting F-sharp minor and D major. The leading tones then resolve to D major, opening the door for Lansky's constant dialogue between the two keys throughout the section. The G-sharp from the first measure turns out to be extremely important for the harmonic process, more so than just a color tone, as its appearance in measure 3 paves the way for the suspended E major chord in measure 4, which normally would not be in D major or minor. The suspension is repeated several times, with the final occurrence happening on the F-sharp minor chord with an added G-sharp from the opening measure of the section, beginning a sequence leading down to the first actual G-sharp major sonority in measure 88, which ends the phrase by resolving to octave C-sharps. While the C-sharps end a solemn phrase, they are not a point of harmonic stasis. The G-sharp sonority was a *secondary* dominant. Measure 94 begins the next phrase on what else but F-sharp! The lonesome C-sharp was actually the small fiber that bridged the gap to the new F-sharp key area!

F-sharp is the new D, acting as a pedal throughout the rest of the movement's middle section, this time as a broad, open fifth sonority with C-sharp and no third, inserted on weak beats between accented, moving chords. The section from measures 94-121 is difficult because of the temptation to overplay the F-sharp and C-sharp open sonorities on weak beats. The important harmonic content lies in the thinner, but accented notes in between. It would be worthwhile for a performer to practice this section without any of the F-sharp pedal chords for some time before inserting them back in. This will make clear their role, which is subservient to those chords occurring on downbeats. A similar sentiment applies to the distant and empty section that follows, from measures 122-156. For most of the section, F-sharp octaves flank quiet, solemn chords that lead into one another, despite their temporal separation. Close attention must be paid to the voice leading from one chord to the next, without letting the pedal F-sharps interfere with the beautiful line being produced.

The B section eventually closes on a chord of F-sharp, C-sharp and F-sharp in a high register, followed by a short recapitulation of the opening theme to end the movement. This chord creates a topic of discussion because it sounds like it could be the end of the movement. Some performers may even not play the recapitulation and instead end the movement there. While such an artistic decision is certainly the right of the performer, the end of the B section should not be treated like, or sound like, a final resting place, as it is not the end of the movement's harmonic journey. Just like the relationship between C and E-flat in the first section of the opening movement, Lansky utilizes third-related key areas to give his work harmonic direction, almost exactly like one would expect a large-scale I-V-I progression in a work from the Classical period. In

this case, the movement begins in a minor key, which in the Classical era would potentially mean a modulation to the relative major, which would have been D minor to F major in this situation. Lansky instead introduces F-sharp and G-sharp before modulating, establishing D major instead of D minor, then moving to F-sharp instead of F, made possible by the F-sharp in the newly introduced D major. While it all sounds organic in context, F-sharp is nowhere near the opening and eventual resting place of D minor. The final phrase is necessary to give the movement the composer's intended harmonic closure. The cross relation between F-sharp and F-natural is jarring, however, making it even more difficult to smoothly connect the ending of the B section with the final phrase. The key here is for the performer not to treat the F-sharp sonority like an ending, which means not adding a fermata, and not tapering the roll to sound like it is completely fading out. If the audience can still clearly distinguish meter and tell when the roll ends in such a sensitive context, it will hint that the movement is not over. That gives the performer an opportunity to take a breath, let the dust settle, so to speak, and begin the D minor recapitulation with much less aural consequence. Paying close attention to the dynamic marking will also prove beneficial, as the recapitulation is markedly louder than the end of the B section. A confident entrance into the final phrase will establish it to the audience as a definitive recapitulation, allowing the performer to make his or her musical decision on how to end the movement appropriately.

### Movement III:

The third and final movement, titled “Slide,” largely continues Lansky’s formal trends from throughout the piece. All but one section develop the opening material, utilizing key areas connected by thirds, exactly like the first movement. The main

musical material consists of driving contrapuntal lines in A-flat minor that rely more on the asymmetric meters for forward motion than the harmonies. The left hand notes become accompanimental shortly into the movement, producing broken chords that contain roots, fifths, and sometimes a seventh, though almost never a third. This is likely due in part to the fact that this voicing is much more idiomatic on the marimba than if the thirds were included, due to the layout of the instrument. According to Nancy Zeltsman, who commissioned and premiered the work, the original version of this movement had far more notes and was nearly impossible to play, which likely also contributed to this textural decision.

Perhaps the most notable element of Lansky's counterpoint is the constant parallel motion between the highest and lowest voices. While it can often be hidden in the texture, it is a central force in the music's development. For example, following sequential motion in measures 9-10, in which the top and bottom voices progress in an octave, fifth, octave, fifth pattern, the bass line clearly moves stepwise through measures 12 and 13. By observing the top notes of each right hand dyad, one will discover that the bass and soprano move in parallel sixths, as long as one considers the A-flat and E-flat that end measure 12 to represent bass motion to the downbeat of measure 13, possibly scored in the right hand due to technical limitations of the marimba, or simply because the composer did not want to disrupt the dichotomy of high and low throughout the section. The sixths even continue through measure 13, though inverted, as the first beat presents an E to G-sharp tenth, and the second beat has A to C-sharp, not the mention the F-sharp, D sixth on the third subdivision of measure 14.

This counterpoint is especially important to note because such knowledge has a significant impact on a performer's choice of phrasing. While Lansky includes accents on the right hand dyads throughout measures 9-12, the corresponding bass notes do not always strike simultaneously, and each are part of a moving line that is difficult in its own right. Especially in the left hand, the performer should utilize a relaxed but powerful stroke that harnesses the natural weight of the arm to really "dig in" to the bass notes through this section and most of the movement. While the metrical qualities serve as the primary driving force, these contrapuntal anecdotes will have a positive impact on the listener, presenting a clear harmonic frame work and something onto which one's mind may latch, instead of simply getting caught up in a flurry of running notes.

One way in which the third movement differs from the first is that the second large phrase, beginning at measure 22, begins as a direct repeat of the opening and in the same key, unlike the first movement, which contains similar material in a third-related key. The repeat quickly veers off the course, however, freely expanding and embellishing the contrapuntal ideas from measures 9-21. Both hands are much more active, though the stepwise bass motion and parallel thirds and sixths are still prevalent. Measure 34 begins an energetic transition that again incorporates stepwise motion in the bass to bring us from A-flat down to C, finally achieved in measure 43.

The section from measures 46-81 begins in the expected third-related key of C minor, though it soon departs. This is very much another presentation of the opening material, but transposed and even more embellished, with broad, large-scale lines travelling further from the tonic than any have thus far. For instance, in measure 52 we arrive on G minor, which is the minor dominant of the key. Looking closely at the bass

line, one will observe it travelling consistently down by half step until it arrives at G again in measure 58 (save for the skip from E-flat to B in measures 55-56, made possible by the scalar motion to B-flat in both voices during measure 55, producing a sort of appoggiatura effect). Lansky then utilizes descending chromatic motion again by jumping from F-sharp to C-sharp to allow a return to C at measure 65. Following some further development of the opening material in C minor, it is time to modulate back to A-flat come measure 73. Lansky's approach is initially confusing however, as he once again implements a chromatic bass line, but one that seems to travel to A instead of A-flat. Beginning with the C in measure 73, there is then B-natural in measure 74, beat 2, B-flat in measure 75, beat 2, and a low A at the very end of measure 77. This A is immediately followed by the first G-sharp in quite some time, giving a strong implication of A major. Following scalar motion for the rest of the measure, however, measures 80-81 move sequentially between B-flat, the chromatic upper neighbor, and A, eventually landing on A-flat to begin the next section, showing that the motion to A was so Lansky could defy aural expectations yet again, and utilize it only for its chromatic descending motion to the original tonic!

While the above analysis may prove interesting, it is not necessary for a performer to bring out the descending bass line as a whole, but rather to anchor the harmonic motion about the most important harmonies to the key. The overall harmonic framework of measures 46-81 is very similar to what one would expect in a middle section of a work from the common practice era. The scalar motion from G to G in measures 52-58 is a clear prolongation of V, or the dominant, in the key of C minor. It differs from music of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries because of the chosen vertical harmonies and the way the inner

voices behave. Lansky does not, at all, follow voice leading rules of the common practice period, with almost every chord existing in root position and lacking a third altogether, resulting in countless parallel perfect intervals, a condemnable offense in the time of Mozart and Haydn. The main theme's return at measure 65 shows how measure 46 to that point is merely an extension of the C minor tonic, and the most important material is what follows, transitioning back to A-flat minor. With this in mind, a performer should definitely emphasize the voice leading, especially centering around V, but save the most energy for the coming transitional material at measure 65. As the harmony returns to C minor yet again at measure 73, the performer should really begin to emphasize the subtly falling bass line, truly projecting the low B and B-flat in measures 74 and 75, respectively, and conveying deliberate motion throughout the scalar passages in measures 77-79, ultimately leading to the temporary goal of A, before teasing the listeners' ears by confidently landing on the home A-flat at measure 82.

While the following section begins like the opening theme, it quickly dissolves into new material, which serves as the “B” section of the movement’s ternary form. The B theme is interesting in that it retains a similar texture to the beginning, with moving lines in the left hand and detached dyads in the right, but this time the left hand’s moving lines present clear melodic material. At measure 107 it appears as if the music has already returned to the opening section, but the recapitulation fails, launching into the section marked “with abandon” at measure 117. This section serves to, again, travel back to A-flat minor through a descending chromatic line in the bass, just like the C minor section from earlier. Beginning with the bass E-flat in measure 117, the D below appears in measure 121 and continues downward chromatically until interplay begins between A

and A-flat from measures 125-132, very similar in character to the interplay between B-flat and A at measures 80-81. Measures 137 and 138 contain a sort of “cadence” to A-flat, almost identical to the one from measures 105-106, finally leading to a successful recapitulation, beginning at measure 139.

Lansky clearly intends to draw attention to measures 117-128 by marking them “with abandon,” but the harmony and texture also affirm the section’s climactic role in the movement. The left hand has contained all sorts of parallel thirds and sixths throughout the movement, as well as constant descending chromatic motion leading to important structural harmonies. Meanwhile, the right hand has contained detached, sometimes accompanimental dyads for a majority of the time. At “with abandon” the right hand is par for the course, but the left hand is now striking its own simultaneous dyads, forming clear, articulate parallel thirds in a descending chromatic line! Unlike with the broken chords present until this point, the function of the bass notes could not be more obvious, pinning these phrases as a climactic culmination of the movement’s musical characteristics.

The recapitulation does not begin with the exact material from the beginning, however. Instead, measures 139-153 contain three nearly identical phrases, of six measures each, which continually reaffirm our arrival back in A-flat. The first two measures show a bass line of A-flat, B-flat, A and back to A-flat, like a miniature descending chromatic line, while the following measures present a leap in the bass to a G-flat, B-flat third at measure 143, which travels downward chromatically to an Em<sup>7</sup> chord, or the minor dominant of A-flat, bringing us back to tonic repeatedly, at measures 144-155, 150-151, and 155-156. Measure 156 marks the final, long awaited return of the

opening theme in all its glory, followed by a small diversion from measures 159-163, harkening back to the material from measures 117-128, and a final two measure statement in A-flat minor to end the work.

Measures 154 to the end are nothing earth-shattering from a compositional standpoint, but the section from measures 139-153 is rather curious as the three phrases are nearly exact repeats of one another, save for just a handful of notes. The only time in the entire work that Lansky utilized an exact repeat was during each statement of the primary theme of Movement 2, but that was a main element of the movement, and not a single drawn-out recapitulation section. A performance approach to the repeated phrases is tricky, as Lansky gives the entire section a fortissimo dynamic label. One idea to build interest within the section would be to use a piano dynamic to begin the section while slowly building in volume, though it would completely contradict the composer's intentions, and while one could still give a valid argument for the implementation of such an idea, the purpose of this discussion is to focus on what is specifically *in the music* and how to interpret it in performance. Therefore, keeping the fortissimo dynamic in mind, one may draw close attention to the small differences in each repeat, using minimal volume changes to build energy and intensity throughout. The most notable change each time exists in measures 140, 146, and 151, during which one E-flat, A-flat eighth note dyad is added to the right hand at the end of the measure during each repetition. Considering there is also no left hand activity during these accented notes, one should approach these hits with careful attention to proper striking technique to get a loud, energetic, full, and intense sound, while not losing tone quality and resonance by overplaying. These notes are also the clearest *aural* difference, as they change the meter

and groove that has been so important and apparent throughout the section and movement. An increase in dynamic should be completely acceptable leading into measure 154 following the repeats, as it is the final “cadence” in the work, with the entire last phrase resembling a codetta like one would expect from a movement of Mozart or Beethoven.

#### Large Scale Formal Considerations and Influence of Common Practice Composition:

After a thorough examination of each movement, one can make several observations about Lansky’s compositional approach to *Three Moves*:

- All three movements utilize similar ternary (ABA') forms.
- All three movements utilize key areas whose tonics are related by third.
- While the harmonies do not imply the type of tonal function expected in music of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the work can be considered “tonal” in the sense that each section of each movement exists within clearly distinguishable key areas.
- The composer presents constantly active and energetic bass lines, emphasizing the importance of the counterpoint between the bass and outer voices, especially in the second and third movements.
  - Along the same lines, the bass tends to be the driving force of the music, rather than recurring melodic material. This is especially true in the first and third movements, while partially true for the second, as the melody of the main theme exists in an inner voice.
- While the piece contains many, many notes and is extremely challenging to play, many sections can be reduced to represent a simple expansion of tonic, much like music of the Classical period. One must look at transitions between large sections

and different key areas to find the most significant harmonic motion to favor in performance.

Keeping in mind the above observations, it seems almost as if Lansky had in mind common practice compositional techniques, and purposely defied them in subtle ways. For instance, a work utilizing ternary form in a minor key would often modulate to the dominant or relative major. In the opening movement, Lansky modulates from C minor to E-flat minor. The E-flat could be expected, but we are given the relative major's *minor* instead. The following two movements present examples straying even further from what would be expected, as the B sections in both movements have a tonic that is also a third above that of the opening, but this time a major third, meaning the new tonic pitch did not even exist within the original minor key (Mvt. 2: Dm to F#m, Mvt. 3: Abm to Cm). These modulations along with the chromatic expansion of V in Movement 3, measures 52-58, augmented sixth chords in Movement 1, and many other small details truly imply an influence of Classical compositional techniques in Lansky's work.

The biggest takeaway from these inferences as a performer is that the work has a strong tonal framework that should be closely observed, as opposed to many other modern works for the marimba that may utilize post-tonal pitch systems, minimalist formal characteristics, gestural or programmatic musical material, or simply a less thought out and deeply detailed compositional approach. In *Three Moves*, harmony and counterpoint are of utmost importance, along with emphasizing the meter and groove throughout. A focus on harmony is not intended to detract from the subtle programmatic affects of each movement or the performer's ability to convey emotion and excitement to an audience, but rather to solidify a foundation upon which the performer may build his

or her personal musical ideas that go beyond basic theoretical analysis. Theoretical observations in this context should be treated as information to assist in making an informed decision, like how one reads a meteorologist's interpretation of the day's weather before deciding what clothes to wear.

Performance Suggestions for Reoccurring Compositional Techniques:

-Repetitive bass line throughout Movement 1:

While the bass line demands constant attention to propel the groove of the piece, it is roughly the same few notes repeated many, many times within each section. Taking a hierarchical approach, the most weight should be placed on the IV, V, I motions that end each phrase, such as from measure 4 into measure 5 and measure 15 into measure 16.

-Modulations to third-related key areas:

In Movements 1 and 2 these are direct modulations, meaning that there is no cadence to establish the new key. Certain pitches in the preceding phrases may prepare the arrival, but the new key ultimately begins abruptly. This is especially true in the second movement, where the new key at measure 76 contains F-sharp, causing a clear cross-relation with F-natural, the third of D minor. It would benefit to the performer to *emphasize* this dissonance instead of hide it, however, as the leap up of a major third between tonics presents a striking beauty for which the listener's ears were not prepared, increasing its effectiveness.

Movement 3 contains more traditional modulations and they can be treated as such. During the modulation to C minor into measure 46, the new key is established in the preceding two measures complete with a flat seventh (B-flat) to the tonic and secondary leading tones to the fifth (F-sharp to G). The section of the run in measure 45 may be interpreted as a C minor progression embellished with lower neighbors, and can be phrased hierarchically, with G, C, F, and G representing a quick V, i, iv, V, and each preceding note (F-sharp, B, E, F-sharp) receiving less emphasis due to their role as non-chord tones.

-Descending chromatic lines in the bass:

Similarly to the modulation to C minor in Movement 3, the descending chromatic lines should be dissected and treated as their larger functions. The expansion of V from measures 52-58 that has been mentioned several times is a clear example, as G is the most important pitch here and should receive the most emphasis. Also important is A-flat, which acts as a leading tone to G from above, like Lansky's version of a secondary dominant, a technique he employs several times throughout the movement. The jump from E-flat to B-natural in mm. 55-56 is notable, but not a structural pillar as G and A-flat are. Therefore, it is appropriate to draw attention to that small area of harmonic interest, but not to treat it as if it is equally important and the underlying dominant sonority. The remainder of the pitches involved in the chromatic descent may be phrased in such a fashion that pushes linearly towards the aforementioned areas of

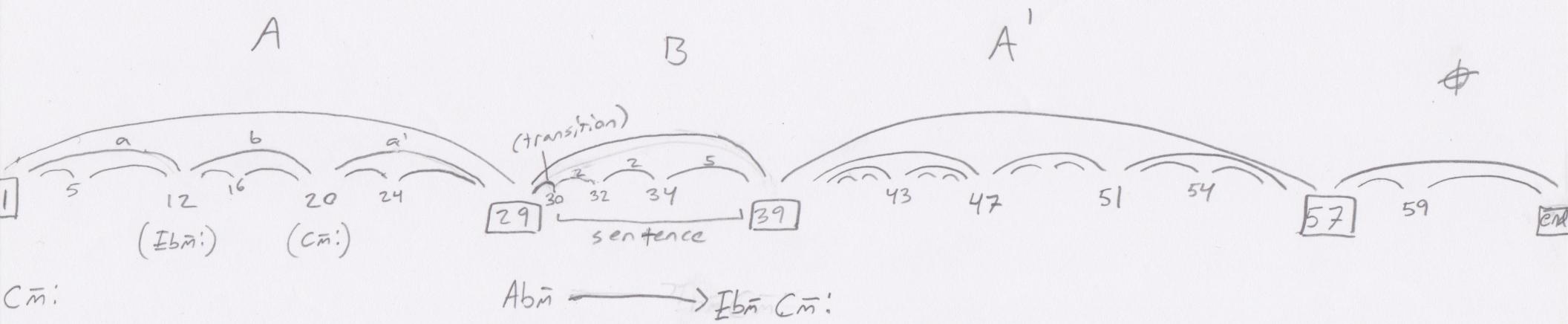
increased interest. This is, of course, difficult due to the disjunct nature of the broken chord texture, but it is definitely possible and noticeable to the listener with a keen ear. The difficulty is more severe during the “with abandon” section at measure 117, where the first two pitches of the descent, E-flat and D, are separated by two measures. Much care should be taken to emphasize the notes with such an energy that brings out their connection and allows the listener to hear E-flat as the beginning of the chromatic descent to A-flat. The rest of the section is straightforward, but very difficult to execute from a technical standpoint.

#### Conclusion:

Beyond the immense technical difficulty of Paul Lansky’s *Three Moves for Marimba* lies a composition with well thought-out formal and harmonic characteristics, almost neoclassical in nature. The composer’s modern approach to common practice formal and harmonic characteristics results in a work that ultimately brings the listener where he or she expects, but through interesting and unexpected motions. These analyses serve to demystify key elements of Lansky’s compositional approach, allowing the performer to make informed musical and technical decisions when communicating the work to an audience.

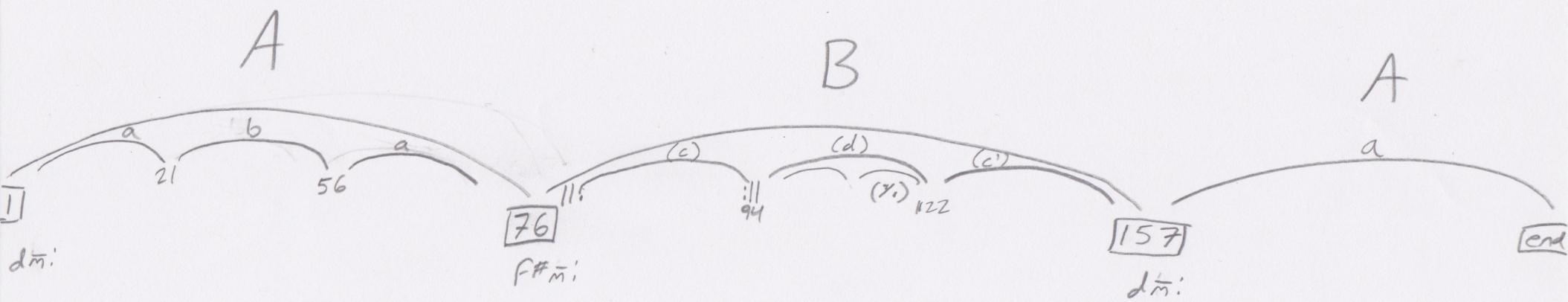
Paul Lansky: Three Moves for Marimba, I: Hop (2)  
 Form Diagram

Marco Schirripa  
 Mus-F 603, Fall 2015



Paul Lansky: Three Moves for Marimba, II. Turn  
Form Diagram

Marco Schimpf  
MUS-F 603, Fall 2015



## Form Diagram

