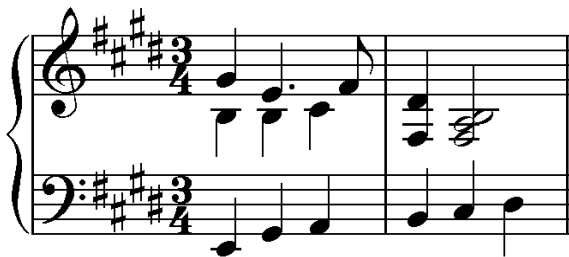


An Introduction to *voiceXchange*



In technical terms, a voice exchange obtains when the outer voices of a harmonic progression—their contrapuntal substrate—trade pitch classes. In the opening of the theme from the concluding movement of Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in E major, op. 109, for instance (quoted above), the lowest notes of the left hand on the first two beats of m. 1 are E2 and G#2; the highest notes of the right hand on the first two beats are G#4 and E4. The pitch classes E and G# have thus exchanged places: what was in the bass on the first beat is in the soprano on the second, and vice versa. Beethoven immediately follows this voice exchange with another in m. 2, although this time movement between the major tenth formed by B2 and D#4 on the first beat and the minor sixth formed by D#3 and B3 on the third beat is complicated by the C#3 that sounds on the second beat, which momentarily creates a rather striking dissonance and obscures the mirror-like reflection of pitch classes audible in m. 1.

This sort of progression serves as an apt model—if one both ideal and idealized—for a journal aimed at inspiring colloquy among music scholars. It is not so much that Scholar A will claim the equivalent of “E2, therefore G#2” and Scholar B will reply with the equivalent of “To the contrary, G#4, therefore E4” (with or without a dissonant interjection produced by some extraneous fact), for this would be far too simplistic an interpretation of the technical device of a voice exchange and far too limited an application of the metaphor to the process of scholarly dialogue. It is instead that, through listening to one another, we can come to a better understanding of our own positions: the relevance of the voice exchange is not the activity of the individual voices but the structure created by the whole.

In the best of circumstances, such listening would occur in person, in real time, but there is also something to be said for the process of listening—or is that “listening”?—made possible

through writing. There are any number of arguments for the way writing, as a communicative medium, structures thinking. Nonetheless, I think we can, in the interest of imagination, relax strictures on distinctions between speaking and writing: readers of scholarly literature know that different writers have different voices and that we can not only hear the resonance of these voices as we read but may find their echo in our own writing. There is, of course, a knack to detecting the grain of the scholarly voice, and it can sometimes be a bit of a challenge when either the voice or the argument is unfamiliar. All the more reason, then, to have a venue within which one can attend carefully to the writer's voice, revisit the arguments it presents, and reflect on the import of both.

The aim of *voiceXchange*—the journal, not the technical procedure—is to provide such a venue. Perhaps more importantly, however, is the construction of “scholarly voice” this particular journal offers. The Department of Music at the University of Chicago is noted for the free exchange of ideas among music historians, music theorists, ethnomusicologists, and composers. Cooperative ventures between these various subdisciplines are typical of both the students and faculty of the Department and they serve as a model to the University as a whole for innovation within and across scholarly disciplines. (Of the twelve interdisciplinary courses offered through the Center for Disciplinary Innovation at the University of Chicago's Franke Institute for the Humanities (<http://hum.uchicago.edu/frankeinstitute/cdi.html>) during 2008–2010, for instance, four involved music faculty.) What *voiceXchange* intends to offer, then, is not simply a venue for scholarly discourse but an ongoing demonstration of how music's various subdisciplines can talk to one another and how both those subdisciplines and the scholars who define them can profit from the discussion.

Let me encourage you to listen to the voices of *voiceXchange*, to reflect on the arguments they make and the way they make them, and to consider adding your own voice to the discourse, whether through an article, a review, commentary, or music.

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