

On the Nature of Cyclic Time in Music Michael Tenzer, University of British Columbia

Musical cycles manifest in many ways worldwide, each promising a range of analytical potentials. Nonetheless, their structures collectively comprise a coherent group of architectonic techniques that can ultimately be inventoried and studied together. Burgeoning interest in the analysis of world musics stimulates new curiosity about them, suggesting a need for richer comparative descriptions than those we currently have, formulated with support from the range of insider perspectives now available in published form.

The purpose here is to theorize cycles as a category of musical time, so that they can eventually fit into a larger typology of such categories. The first step is to depict cycles' unity-in-variety, and then to address their three main aspects: temporal organization, modelization, and realization. In cycles the fact of a regularly recurring *timepoint of origin* impacts upon perception in ways linked to cultural consensus and repertoire characteristics. Each cyclic timepoint has a diachronic identity determined by the temporal interval to and from the origin. It also has a synchronic identity affected by the field distance from the modeled structure at that instant.

The foregoing is illustrated with three analyses of compositional materials in diverse cyclic repertoires (transcribed selections of Balinese music, Central African song, and jazz). The analyses reveal characteristic higher-level patterns associated specifically with cyclic time. Last, cyclic properties are viewed relative to theories of rhythm and meter. This requires some critique of existing theories, which do not account for cycles' special nature.