Harmonic and formal coherence in Morton Feldman’s late music

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Abstract
Initially Morton Feldman’s later music, i.e., those works dating from approximately 1975 until his death in 1987, can be challenging to comprehend. For instance, the large amount of seemingly undifferentiated aural information, played at a soft dynamic and heard for an extended period of time, can leave a listener with the notion that this music “sounds the same.” Unfortunately, turning to Feldman himself for assistance about how to understand these expansive compositions is of limited value, as his narratives are often at odds to understand their formal design and pitch structure.

In this paper, by drawing from sketch materials housed in the Paul Sacher Stiftung, I elucidate that Feldman’s compositions contain a more refined degree of pre-compositional planning than is often acknowledged in the literature. Further, by using the 1981 piano solo *Triadic Memories* as the basis of my discussion, I propose that by correlating portions of the extant sketches with a published score, it is possible to identify a comprehensive harmonic and formal organisation to these large-scale compositions.

CV
Edward Jurkowski: Professor, New Media Chair, Department of Music, University Lethbridge, Canada. Areas of research/creative activities: Analysis, Twentieth-Century music, Nordic music, and Film music. Following his Bachelor's degree, Dr. Jurkowski completed an MA in Music Theory and a Ph.D. in Music Theory from the University of Rochester. As a theorist, Dr. Jurkowski's principal teachers include David Beach (Schenkerian theory), Robert Gauldin (counterpoint and pedagogy), David Headlam (twentieth-century analysis and dissertation advisor), Robert Morris (twentieth-century analysis), and Robert Wason (history of theory). His composition teachers included Samuel Adler, Warren Benson, Michael Matthews, Christopher Rouse, and Joseph Schwantner. Prior to his appointment to The University of Lethbridge, Dr. Jurkowski held positions as Instructor of Music at the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Rochester, Instructor of Music at the Eastman School of Music, and a Teaching Assistant at the Eastman School of Music.