

# Prolongation

*Prolongation*

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## Resumo

Este artigo evidencia e documenta as diferenças de significado entre o termo “prolongation” em inglês e *Prolongation* em alemão, assim como a própria maneira como Schenker concebia este termo. Enfatizando que, para Schenker, a palavra descreve a relação orgânica da *Ursatz* com o nível frontal, uma relação estabelecida na camada “profunda” da obra, enquanto em inglês este termo denota a extensão temporal de um evento harmônico ou melódico. A concepção inglesa de “prolongation” não é ilegítima, mas oculta uma parcela da dimensão que o termo tem para Schenker.

**Palavras-chave:** *Prolongation*, *Auskomponierung*, intervalo de tempo, profundidade, organicismo.

## Abstract

The article evidences and documents the differences in meaning between the English term “prolongation”, the German *Prolongation*, and Schenker’s own understanding of the term. It stresses that, for Schenker, the word describes the organic relation from *Ursatz* to foreground, a relation in the “depth” of the work, while in English it denotes the extension in time of a harmonic or melodic event. The English understanding of “prolongation” is not illegitimate, but it hides a dimension of Schenker’s *understanding*.

**Keywords:** *Prolongation*, *Auskomponierung*, time span, depth, organicism.

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## Article

The concept of “prolongation” is essential to Schenkerian theory, up to the point that Schenkerian analysis at times has been termed “prolongational analysis”. The English term “prolongation” expresses the extension of a melodic or harmonic degree in time, in a temporal span of the musical work. Reducing these temporal prolongations is presented as one of the main purposes of Schenkerian analysis which, for this reason, is also called “reduction analysis” or “time-span reduction analysis”. This all gives an interesting image of what Schenkerian analysis really is, and the purpose of the present article is not to condemn this usage.

It must be stressed, however, that Schenker himself used the not very common German word *Prolongation* in a different meaning. I would like, therefore, to discuss here the difference and to better describe Schenker’s own understanding of the term. I believe, indeed, that as interesting as the idea of “prolongation” as an extension in a temporal span may be, it might hide another aspect, the main one that Schenker had in mind, the prolongation in the “depth” of the work.

That the American concept of “prolongation” hides the meaning of Schenker’s view may be illustrated by a comparison of Oster’s translation in *Free Composition* of a German phrase by Schenker, and its more literal translation:<sup>2</sup>

### ***Ernst Oster’s translation***

My concepts show that the art of music is much simpler than present-day teaching would have it appear. However, the fact that the simplicity does not lie on the surface makes it no less simple. Every surface, seen for itself alone, is of necessity confusing and always complex.

### ***Schenker’s original German***

*Meine Lehre erweist, daß die Kunst der Musik viel einfacher ist, als die heutigen Lehren sie erscheinen lassen. Das aber das Einfachste in der Tiefe liegt, macht sie nicht weniger einfach, ist doch alle Oberfläche, für sich allein betrachtet, verwirrend und stets auch uneinfach.*

### ***A more literal translation***

My teaching shows that the art of music is much simpler than present-day teaching lets it appear. However, the fact that the simplest resides in the depth makes it no less simple, as every surface, considered for itself alone, is confusing and also always less simple.

As can be seen, Oster’s translation changes Schenker’s “in the depth” into “not on the surface” and so doing, nowhere mentioning “the depth,” merely avoids the problem of determining what Schenker meant by it. The difference is subtle and Oster’s translation may seem correct, but it is biased.

In the analysis of Scarlatti’s Sonata in D minor in *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, Ian Bent in his translation of Schenker’s German favors spatial metaphors, while Schenker’s text could

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<sup>2</sup> The translation is taken from *Free Composition* (1979: p. xxiii); the German text is from the second edition of *Der freie Satz* (1954: p. 18). The more literal translation is my own. All translations in this article similarly are my own more literal versions of the existing ones, to which my debt remains considerable. This is not to criticize the existing translations, but merely to make it easier to link the English translations to the German texts.

also be understood otherwise. Schenker notes that the intervals of the *Ursatz* are transformed by counterpoint into interval progressions “which must expand further and further”<sup>3</sup> (Schenker 1925: p. 127). Bent translates saying that they “had to expand to greater and greater lengths” (Schenker 1994: p. 67), somehow stressing that the expansion is in length, which may or may not be what Schenker had in mind. Later in the same page, Schenker says that “for a progression of only a few notes in the *Ursatz*, literally armies of intervals enter [in the subsequent levels].”<sup>4</sup> Bent translates as follows: “A veritable multitude of intervals arises out of a brief succession of notes in the *Ursatz*,” implying that the succession in the *Ursatz* was shorter (in time or in length: “a brief succession”), while Schenker merely said that the intervals were less numerous (*nur wenigen Tönen*). Bent’s translations are not necessarily inexact, but they hide the fact that, for Schenker, the *Ursatz* has no duration, so that its transformations to the foreground cannot consist in lengthening it. The *Ursatz* in no way is ‘shorter’ than the foreground.

My purpose, however, is not to claim that the American English usage of the term would be illegitimate because it does not conform to the German meaning or to Schenker’s own usage. My concern is mainly terminological: what I want to show is that Schenker’s *Prolongation* (in German) should not merely be understood as equivalent to “prolongation” (in English) and that the latter should not be considered a mere translation of the first. I will organize my revision of these concepts in four sections: (1) a historical survey of the usage of “prolongation” in American English; (2) a very short discussion of the German word *Prolongation* before Schenker; (3) *Prolongation* in Schenker; and (4) a hint on the dimensions of “width” and “depth” in Schenkerian theory.

## The American English usage of “prolongation”

The first usage of the English term “prolongation” applied to music that I have been to trace is in Lytle (1931), a text which predates Hans Weisse’s emigration to the United States and, probably, Weisse’s teaching in English.<sup>5</sup> Lytle writes of “what [he] call[s] in music prolongation”, and the term indeed may be his. He defines it as “the ability to go from one point to another, however distant, never using that which is not related to the whole and always that which leads unerringly to the final goal” (Lytle 1931: p. 663). In the short analyses that follow, Lytle appears to consider prolongation as one of the means of elaboration (*Auskomponierung*). Describing Lytle’s article, Berry (2005: p. 111) seems to believe that Lytle took “prolongation”, in the American meaning, directly from mentions of *Prolongation* in several

3 ... die sich immer weiter und weiter dehnen müssen.

4 Für einen Gang von nur wenigen Tönen des Ursatzes treten förmlich Heere von Intervallen ein.

5 The chronology is important because the question remains whether Lytle could have taken the term over from Weisse. The latter arrived in New York in late September 1931 and gave a first talk in Mannes Music School in October (see [https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-15-16\\_82.html](https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-15-16_82.html)). Lytle’s article in *The American Organist* is in the November issue, but it must have been written earlier, and there is no evidence that Lytle, who was at Oberlin, attended Weisse’s lectures. However, he had followed the teaching of Weisse in Vienna in 1928–1930 (see Berry 2005: p. 96–97): Weisse might have used there the German term *Prolongation* in the American meaning, but that does not seem very likely.

publications by Schenker himself, among others in *Kontrapunkt 2* (1922), but we will see that this hardly could be the case.

Adele Katz, in her article "Heinrich Schenker's Method of Analysis"<sup>6</sup> of 1935, explains how Schenker derives tonality from the *Klang* of nature, formed of the first five harmonic partials. She adds that

It is [...] necessary to differentiate between the natural principle, which is Simultaneity (as expressed in the *Klang*), and the artistic adaptation of that principle, which is Succession. In other words, the triad represents a form of natural Coherence. Tonality, then, is the form of Coherence obtained by shifting the raw material – the natural triad – from its vertical position to a horizontal one, and by extending it by means of Succession or Horizontalization (Katz 1935: p. 313).<sup>7</sup>

Katz rightly describes the *Klang* as offering a space within which the genius of the composer may give way to his imagination. She writes:

Having seen that the Background (as evolving from the *Klang*) is typical in the works of the masters, one may next inquire: By what means does the genius translate this primordial material into a Foreground that is the result of his own fantasy and imagination? The answer is: He has done this by Prolongation. This is the extension of the simple form of Horizontalization by filling in the Space. (Katz 1935, p. 315)

And the rest of her article mainly is a description of means of prolongation. In all this, she confirms an idea presented by Schenker himself, but which he would rather have called "elaboration." In his *Harmonielehre* (1906), for instance, Schenker had written that being transformed into a motive, "each harmony is not merely asserted, but also elaborated (*auskomponiert*) and through this proven."<sup>8</sup>

In Adele Katz' *Challenge to Musical Tradition* (1945), the term "prolongation" becomes ubiquitous.<sup>9</sup> She describes "the two basic elements that create unity and coherence – *structure* and *prolongation*" (Katz 1945: p. 14), opposing these elements to each other because she considers that prolongation does not belong to structure. She associates "structure" with harmonic progression and "prolongation" with counterpoint (or, more probably, with

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6 Although Katz does not mention it, this text is based to a large extent on Schenker's "Erläuterungen", that he presented as part of *Der freie Satz*, and that had been published four times: in *Der Tonwille* 8/9 (1924), pp. 49-51 and 10 (1924), pp. 40-42, and in *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik* 1 (1925), pp. 203-205, and 2 (1926), pp. 195-197. Katz' examples 1-4, 6, 8 and 10 reproduce examples 1, 2 (a and b), 3, 4a and 4c from Schenker's article.

7 Katz' interpretation, which is correct, may originate in Schenker's statement in "Die Kunst der Improvisation" (Schenker 1925: p. 12): "Music is a vital movement of tones in the space given by nature, an elaboration (melodization, horizontalization) of the *Klang* given by nature" (*Musik ist lebendiger Bewegung von Tönen im naturgegebenen Raum, Auskomponierung (Melodisierung, Horizontalisierung) des in der Natur gegebenen Klanges*), or possibly from the introductory text of that volume (Schenker 1925: p. 7), "The natural idea of the triad, the artistic idea of the elaboration of this *Klang*, the perfection in the transformation of a *Klang* into many by means of voice-leading prolongations, the creation of form as consequence of the *Umlinie*, all that makes a masterwork" (*Die Naturidee des Dreiklages, die Kunstidee der Auskomponierung dieses Klages, die Vollendung in der Überführung eines Klages in viele mittels der Stimmführungsprolongationen, die Formgebung als Ablauf der Umlinie, alles das macht ein Meisterwerk aus*).

8 *Harmonielehre*, p. 282, § 116: *Es wird solchermassen eine jegliche Harmonie nicht bloß behauptet, sondern auch auskomponiert und dadurch erst erwiesen.* In *Harmony* (1954), E. Mann Borghese translates the last words as "unfolded and demonstrated in this unfolding". To translate *Auskomponierung*, which often is translated as "composing out", I prefer "elaboration," but justifying my translation would be beyond the scope of this article.

9 The substantive "prolongation" and the verb "to prolong" are found more than 700 times in the book, which counts about 400 pages.

chords deriving from counterpoint): “The principle that operates through the harmonic progression has a structural function. The principle demonstrated by the contrapuntal chords serves a non-structural, but an expanding or prolonging, function” (Katz 1945: p. 15). The two functions, structural and prolonging, also exist in the case of melodic progressions, particularly in the top voice: “Just as there are chords that create the structural framework, and chords that expand it, so there are tones in the melody that outline a structural motion and tones that have a prolonging or an embellishing and therefore non-structural function” (Katz 1945:p. 18). In the pages that follow, she describes cases of melodic prolonging function: the initial arpeggiation or the initial ascent, descending lines to an inner voice, neighbor notes, etc. The distinction between structural and prolonging functions, both in chordal and in melodic successions, appears to form an essential aspect, perhaps the most important one, of her description of Schenkerian analysis in the rest of the book. In *Structural Hearing* (1952), Felix Salzer acknowledges his indebtedness to Adele Katz<sup>10</sup> and proposes a very similar description of the structural and prolonging functions of chords and melodies.<sup>11</sup>

After that, the term is completely established in American Schenkerism. Forte and Gilbert (1982: p. 142) write that “in Schenkerian analysis the concept of *prolongation* is basic. Prolongation refers to the ways in which a musical component – a note (melodic prolongation) or a chord (harmonic prolongation) – remains in effect without being literally represented at every moment.” They describe prolongations not only of triads, but also of 7<sup>th</sup> and other dissonant chords. This opens the path to developments that probably could not find justification in Schenker’s own writings, dissonant prolongations (Morgan 1976, Goldenberg 2008, and others), or prolongations in post-tonal music (Väisälä 2004). The term takes on a more extended meaning, beyond what it may mean in American Schenkerian theory, in Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s *General Theory of Tonal Music*, where “prolongation” and “reduction”, not very clearly defined, are described as essential means of establishing the hierarchies that govern a musical composition; but this reaches beyond our present concern.

Some English-speaking Schenkerians did realize the difference between the American understanding of “prolongation” and Schenker’s own usage of the term, but may not have enough tried to understand Schenker’s meaning. Morgan (1976: p. 87, footnote 1) stresses that his usage of “prolongation” is not a translation of Schenker’s *Prolongation* and that it includes related terms such as *Auskomponierung*. Snarrenberg (1996: p. 324) quotes Joseph Dubiel, who “pointed out that, although Schenker rarely, if ever, uses ‘prolongation’ to refer to the elaboration or extension of a musical entity, Schenkerians have got us into that habit of speaking; meanwhile, for Schenker what is prolonged is almost always a rule or a concept.”<sup>12</sup> Snarrenberg continues:

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10 “Miss Katz’s intimate acquaintance with the problems discussed in this book has been of great assistance. Her constant encouragement has been most inspiring, and in all these years of preparation and research she has generously given from the rich fund of her knowledge and experience” (Salzer 1952: xviii).

11 See in particular Part I, Chapter Two, F, “The implications of structure and prolongation” (Salzer 1952: pp. 28-31), and Part II, Chapters Five to Seven, “Structure and Prolongation” I, II and III (pp. 97-219), about 45 % of the volume of text which counts 283 pp. of text. The words “prolongation” and “to prolong” appear close to a thousand times in the book.

12 This idea, he adds, was first expressed by Dubiel in “When You are a Beethoven: Kinds of Rules in Schenker’s Counterpoint”, *Journal of Music Theory*, 34/ii (1990: p. 293), and subsequently elaborated in ‘What Did Schenker Mean by Prolongation?’, a paper presented at the conference ‘Critical Perspectives on Schenker’ held at the University of Notre Dame, 19-20 March 1994.

Translators have expanded the specific meaning Schenker intended for 'prolongation' by using it for 'Auskomponierung', 'ausdrücken' and 'Auswicklung', Schenker's terms for elaboration and transformation. This is especially true of Oster's translation of *Der freie Satz* [...]. The force of this habit is felt, for example, when Rothgeb renders 'ausdrückt' as 'prolongs' (p. 33, r.h., line 6). The word has no such meaning. Schenker meant what he said: namely, that the third-progression, b'-a'-g' 'expresses' or 'is an expression of' b'.'" John Rothgeb (2005: p. x, note 5) views Schenker's Prolongation as a synonym for *Auskomponierung* – the English understanding of the term – but also as more general, "being used also in expressions such as *Prolongationen der Gesetze der Stimmführung* (extensions or ramifications of the laws of voice leading)." (Snarrenberg 1996: p. 325).

John Koslovsky, in his PhD thesis, writes

The term *Prolongation* (as a Latin word) in particular has often been conflated with composing-out, *Auskomponierung*. Technically speaking, prolongation, at least in the way Salzer interprets it in his Viennese scholarship, denotes the transformation of rules from strict to free composition, whereas composing-out signifies the actual "compositional elaboration" [...] of the chord in musical time and space" (Koslovsky 2009: p. 233).<sup>13</sup>

In all this, the American Schenkerians appear to believe that "prolongation" in English is a more general term, englobing both Schenker's *Prolongation* and *Auskomponierung* (and possibly a few other German terms). But the truth is that "prolongation," in English, mainly translates *Auskomponierung*, while *Prolongation* in German means something quite different, as will appear below, something that the English term does not denote.

## The term *Prolongation* in German

Before turning to what Schenker meant by *Prolongation*, let us shortly review its general meaning in German. *Prolongation* is not an unknown term, but it is not extremely common, belonging almost exclusively to the legal and economic vocabulary. It may be significant that it is not found in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Deutsche Wörterbuch* (vol. VII, 1889). The term is mentioned in Krünitz' *Oekonomische Encyclopädie* (1811), with a very short description, "lengthening of a given period, postponement" (*Verlängerung einer bestimmten Frist, Aufschub*). The entry that follows, *Prolongieren*, is more detailed. It begins with a general definition: "to prolong, postpone or delay the time when something is to happen,"<sup>14</sup> then describes the conditions in which it is possible to prolong a bill of exchange or a payment delay.

13 Koslovsky's comment about Salzer's interpretation of the German *Prolongation* during his Viennese scholarship is striking. I have unfortunately been unable to pursue this track, which probably is true: there is no reason why Salzer writing in German in Vienna would not have used the usual German (or Schenkerian) sense of the term. What is surprising, however, is that Salzer made no mention of this different German meaning in his American writings. This would deserve a separate study.

14 ...die Zeit, da etwas geschehen soll, verlängern, verschieben, oder weiter hinaus setzen.



Meyer's *Großes Konversationslexikon* (1850: pp. 1105-1106) publishes a full-page article on Prolongation<sup>15</sup>, defining it as an "extension of the expiration time of a payment term, especially *prolongation of a bill of exchange*, the extension or postponement of the payment term of a bill of exchange."<sup>16</sup> The article describes contexts and conditions in which a *Prolongation* is possible, and shortly refers to more specialized publications. Among these is Johann Karl Meißner's *Codex der europäischen Wechsel-Rechte*, vol. 1 (1836) of which reproduces several legal texts from the various German federal states. Half a dozen of these, dating between 1725 and 1819, refer to *Prolongation* or *prolongieren*. Weigand's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1910: p. 479) has a very short entry on Prolongation, defined as "Extension, delay, granting of a term." He indicates a derivation from the French and from the Latin, quotes also *prolongieren*, and adds the undocumented comment "Both 17th century." I have been unable to trace a 17th-century source justifying that comment.

## Schenker's usage of Prolongation

Schenker studied law in the University of Vienna from 1884, earning a doctor degree in 1890 (Federhofer 1985: p. 4-5).<sup>17</sup> It is there, probably, that he learned about *Prolongation*. He adapts the term to his theory, for the first time in *Harmonielehre* (1906: p. 228, § 91), stressing that the teacher should be able to explain "in what consists the difference between strict and free writing, which original and inalienable meaning of this or that rule of voice-leading is proper to strict writing, and how the prolongation of the same would apply to free writing, etc."<sup>18</sup> Later (1906: p. 409-410, § 167), discussing dissonant passing notes in third-species counterpoint, he writes that "as in the case of syncopation and anticipation, one fails to say what its prolongation in free writing looks like."<sup>19</sup>

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15 Later editions of Meyer's Lexikon have only shortened versions of the same.

16 *Verlängerung der Verfallzeit einer Zahlungsfrist, besonders Prolongation eines Wechsels, die Verlängerung oder Hinausschiebung der Zahlungszeit eines Wechsels.*

17 Federhofer, p. 5, gives the date of the doctor degree as 1980, an obvious slip for 1890.

18 ... *vorin der Unterschied zwischen dem strengen und freien Satz bestehe, welcher ursprüngliche und unverlierbare Sinn dieser oder jener Stimmführungsregel im strengen Satz eigen sei, und wie sich die Prolongation derselben im freien Satz ausnehme, u. s. w.* E. Mann Borghese translates as "what is the difference between strict composition and free composition; what is the original and inalienable meaning of this or that rule of voice-leading in strict composition; and what would be the aspect of a prolongation or extension of such rule in free composition" (Schenker Harmony, 1954: p. 177). In this and other cases, I conventionally translate *Satz* as "writing" or "setting" rather than as "composition," because while it makes sense to translate *freie Satz* as "free composition", *strenge Satz* hardly could be translated as "strict composition."

19 *Wieder aber wird bei dieser Erscheinung, ähnlich wie bei der Synkope und der Antizipation, zu sagen versäumt, wie sich ihre Prolongation in den freien Satz hinein ausnimmt.* (Schenker Harmony, 1954: p. 311.)



In *Kontrapunkt 1*, in order to illustrate what *Prolongation* is, Schenker discusses a poem by Goethe which does not keep to German normal grammar:

Who can miss the fact that Goethe's sentence, despite all kinds of readjustments, fundamentally evidences only prolongations of the most normal grammatical rules? The new forces that free writing in music with itself affords similarly form an apparent new order, and yet the knower of backgrounds sees the contrapuntal laws deeply and mystically at work, so that their manifestations in free writing invariably must be understood as their prolongations. (Schenker 1910, p. 20. See *Counterpoint 1*, p. 13.)<sup>20</sup>

Schenker in this clearly describes the freedoms taken by Goethe with respect to normal grammatical rules as their artistic "prolongations" and adds that in music, similarly, the freedoms taken in free writing nevertheless maintain a link with stricter rules.

John Rothgeb and Jürgen Thym, the American translators, apparently not entirely at ease with this, add a footnote in which they say that

The concept [of *Prolongation*] is fundamental to Schenker's thought. Highly general, it pertains to the relationship between simple phenomena and their more complex derivatives; thus, just as complex tone-successions are derived from simple ones by *Prolongation*, so also are complex laws of setting tones derived from simple ones by *Prolongation* in the (more figurative) sense of ramification, extension, and adaptation to more elaborated situations. (*Counterpoint 1*, p. 348)

In this, they try to link "complex tone-successions" with "simple ones", which might be a way to describe prolongations in the American sense, but they fail to say that in Schenker, there are no "tone-successions" prolonged in time, only the rules of their succession that are "prolonged" in their additional freedom. The results from these prolonged rules need not necessarily be more complex, or more extended in time, they merely are less strictly grammatical. In other passages of *Kontrapunkt 1*, Schenker clearly confirms this meaning of the term, for instance when he speaks of the "prolongation of a fundamental law" (Schenker 1910, *Prolongationen eines Urgesetzes*, p. 315; transl. p. 240). However, the main object of the first volume of *Kontrapunkt* is two-voice counterpoint, that is, strict writing. Prolongations really begin only with three-voice counterpoint.

In *Kontrapunkt 2*, Schenker explains that the outer voices of three-voice settings maintain the rules of two-voice writing and that, therefore, "the prolongation of two-voice writing prevails over three-voice format, and the voice leading is the more beautiful the better it succeeds in mediating the separation between the three-voice format and the outer voices."<sup>21</sup>

20 Wer kann den übersehen, daß er, trotz allerhand Umstellungen, im Grunde doch nur Prolongationen auch noch der normalsten grammatischen Gesetze aufweist? Ähnlich formen ja auch die neuen Gewalten, die der freie Satz in der Musik mit sich bringt, eine scheinbar neue Ordnung, und dennoch sieht der Kenner im Hintergrunde tief und mystisch die grundlegenden kontrapunktischen Gesetze wirken, so daß die Erscheinungen im freien Satz durchaus nur als deren Prolongationen wieder zu erkennen sind.

21 Die Prolongation des zweistimmigen Satzes siegt somit über die Dreistimmigkeit, und desto schöner wirkt die Stimmführung, je besser es ihr gelingt, die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Dreistimmigkeit und Außensatz zugunsten des letzteren herbeizuführen (Schenker 1910: p. xiv; transl. p. xviii). Schenker confirms this in Chapter 1, § 1, p. 1 (transl., p. 1): "In this sense one may affirm as main principle that in three-voice writing the two-voice one actually continues to operate, the three-voice one is but a prolonged phenomenon." (*In diesem Sinne darf daher als Hauptgrundsatz ausgesprochen werden, daß im dreistimmigen Satze eigentlich der zweistimmige fortläuft, der dreistimmige also eine bloß prolongierte Erscheinung bildet.*)

This is a highly restrictive definition of *Prolongation*, one that Schenker probably will apply less strictly in subsequent writings. But it provides a clear definition of what *Prolongation* is: the outer voices maintain the grammaticality of strict counterpoint, they “prolong” it, even if the third voice is freer. The very first examples of *Prolongation* given in *Kontrapunkt 2* (examples 2 and 3) confirm this: the triad with diminished fifth remains prohibited in three-voice counterpoint because its outer voices keep the dissonant interval of the diminished fifth; in first inversion, however, the chord is allowed because the interval between the outer voices becomes a sixth and therefore prolongs the law of consonance, even although the diminished fifth (or the augmented fourth) appears between the inner and the upper voices.

The many examples of prolongations discussed in *Kontrapunkt 2* evidence the growing difficulty of recognizing the prolonged rules of strict counterpoint when the number of voices increases. Schenker makes this clear in the short chapter devoted to five-, six-, seven- and eight-voice counterpoint. He writes:

To the same extent as the difficulties of the voice leading increase by reason of the increased number of voices, one finds here less and less opportunity to bring the fundamental laws of the contrapuntal voice leading in their strictest form. Not only is there no further prolongation of the fundamental concepts, but, much more, one will be hindered by the increased number of voices from observing them in their original purity (Schenker 1922, p. 164, § 1; *Counterpoint 1*, p. 168)<sup>22</sup>.

In all this, and particularly in the last examples discussed in Schenker’s “Bridges to free writing”, the final part of *Kontrapunkt 2*, his absolute confidence in the validity of the rules of strict counterpoint always remains evident. The idea that outer voices should maintain the grammaticality of strict counterpoint, “prolonging” it by allowing more freedom to the inner voices, certainly is an original, albeit somewhat excessive view of the whole matter, a view that Schenker was bound to temper in later writings. This idea, in addition, is the obvious origin of Schenker’s concept of the *Ursatz*, the primal setting underlying any composition: the *Ursatz* is the strict two-voice counterpoint setting that remains at the basis of a free composition, as hidden as it may be under various “prolongations”.

In *Der Tonwille 5*, in the analysis of Bach’s Little Prelude BWV 926 (Schenker 1923b, p. 8, Fig. 1), Schenker for the first time presents a figure, reproduced below as example 1, showing the development of the work from the *Ursatz* to the full composition.<sup>23</sup> He introduces this figure saying that it shows “the gradual growth of the voice-leading prolongations, all predetermined in the womb of the *Urlinie*”.

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22 *Im selben Maße, als wegen der vermehrten Stimmenzahl die Schwierigkeiten der Stimmenführung sich häufen, findet man hier immer weniger Gelegenheit, die Grundgesetze der kontrapunktischen Stimmführung in ihrer möglichsten Strenge zur Ausführung zu bringen. Nicht nur also, daß sich durchaus keine weitere Prolongation der Grundbegriffe ergibt, wird man durch die angewachsene Stimmenzahl vielmehr behindert, sie in ihrer ursprünglichen Reinheit wahrzunehmen, weshalb auf Übungen in solchen mehrstimmigen Sätzen nicht sonderlich Gewicht gelegt zu werden braucht. In diesem Sinne lasse ich nur wenige Aufgaben unten folgen.*

23 There is a similar figure in the analysis of Bach’s Little Prelude BWV 999 (Schenker 1923a, p.3, Fig. 1), but it does not begin with the full *Ursatz*: the first staff in a) shows only the *Urlinie*; in b) the figure adds an inner voice; and the bass appears only in c).

Example 1: J. S. Bach: Zwölf kleine Präludien, Nr. 5, *Der Tonwille* 5 (1923), p. 8, Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Musical score showing six variations (a-f) of a voice leading in D minor. The score includes measure numbers (7, 9, 21, 25, 29, 33, 39, 44, 45) and chord symbols (V, VI, IV, V, I, II V I). The variations illustrate different ways of prolonging and resolving intervals, with a) being the original setting, b) showing an octave descent, c) showing chromatic notes, and d, e, and f) showing further prolongations.

He later comes back on this figure and writes:

In a) of Fig. 1, one sees the notes of the *Urlinie*, in the two-voice *Ursatz*. One may consider this setting as a first liberty taken with respect to a voice leading set on a true *Cantus firmus* – for a *Cantus firmus* setting, the material proposed here would be too limited –, but the purity in the leading of the intervals conforms to the requirements of strict writing. The image in b) offers a *Prolongation* of the image in a). On what is this based? Merely in that, in order to express the continuation of an *Urlinie* note and an interval (the third or the tenth), an octave descent is called to help [...]. Although within the octave descent the voice leading may also – and that is its own justification – express the requirements of strict counterpoint, its main validity remains its origin in the fundamental voice leading in a), which alone authenticates it as an octave descent, that is as the clarification of only one note and one interval.

Follows the *Prolongation* in c): it rests on the insertion of chromatic notes, still forbidden in strict counterpoint, but which here, in freer settings, take the place of diatonic progressions in order to produce the appearance of cadential closure. The justification of this voice leading once again lies above all in its origin in b) and a), even if it also has its own [justification]. And it is so also in what follows with the *Prolongationen* in d), e) and f): they are all related to the voice leadings in a), b) and c), so that one must say: if the final realization were not traceable to the *Urlinie* voice leading in a), by means of the *Prolongationen* in e), d), c) and b), it would not have the cogency and the perfection that we admire in it. (Schenker: 1923d, p. 45)

This all indicates a shift in the meaning of *Prolongation*: while in *Kontrapunkt 2* it denoted the preservation of rules of strict counterpoint, it seems here to denote both the preservation and the transformation of these rules from one compositional layer to the next and, more generally, the transition itself from layer to layer. About a similar figure concerning the second movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (Schenker: 1923c, p. 33, Fig. 2), Schenker speaks of "the succession of the Prolongationen, that is the layers of the voice-leading", confirming that *Prolongationen* denotes the layers themselves. In the following volumes of *Der Tonwille* and in those of *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik* and in *Der freie Satz*, the German term *Prolongation*, often in the form *Stimmführungsprolongation*, usually refers to successive layers of voice leading.

In *Der freie Satz*, Schenker seems to have become conscious of the difficulty of the unusual term *Prolongation*. In § 45, he stresses the importance of assigning names to concepts, then confirms that he will retain such foreign words as *Prolongation* and *Diminution* to denote voice-leading levels in the middleground, but that he will also use German words for the same: *Stimmführungsschichten*, *Stimmführungsverwandlungen*, *Verwandlung*, *Mehrung*, *Auswicklung*, *Auflösung*, *Umwandlung*, *Umbildung*, and others. It is striking that *Auskomponierung* does not appear in this list, even although it may be the term most often translated as "prolongation" in English.<sup>24</sup> The term *Prolongation* nevertheless remains quite frequent in Schenker's last work, apparently with the same meaning as before – albeit somewhat softened.

## Depth and Breadth

*Prolongation*, for Schenker, denotes both the persistence of strict counterpoint rules into free writing, particularly in the outer voices; and the succession of what he calls the "voice-leading layers", the levels that characterize Schenkerian analysis. It also connotes the link between the foreground of the work and its *Ursatz*. In a passage from *Kontrapunkt 1* already quoted above (see footnote 14), Schenker stresses that "The new forces that free writing affords form an apparent new order, and yet the knower of backgrounds sees the contrapuntal laws deeply and mystically at work, so that their manifestations in free writing invariably must be understood as their prolongations."

A few years later, Schenker becomes more explicit, albeit in quite abstract terms and with a usage of *Sperrdruck* (spaced type, reproduced here as italics in the translation) that probably together stress how important the matter is for him:

Coherence is primary also in music. The supreme secret of all coherence is: A content, continuously extending before us in the foreground, reaches true coherence only when it originates in an already visionary perceived coherence in the depth of a background. But the coherence-in-depth from background to foreground also is a coherence-in-width in the horizontal of the foreground: such a

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<sup>24</sup> Of 148 occurrences of the term "prolongation" (or its derivatives) that I have been able to trace in Oster's translation in *Free Composition*, only 83 (56 %) translate *Prolongation*. The other occurrences translate *Auskomponierung* (27 cases), *Verwandlung* (14), *Stimmführungsschicht* (3), *Durcharbeitung* (2), *Auswirkung* and *Diminution* (1 each) and there is no evident correspondence between "prolongation" in the translation and Schenker's own German in 17 cases. In my own French translation, the situation is better, but not perfect: more than once, I translated *Auskomponierung* as "prolongation."

coherence, considered biologically, realizes the truly organic, the synthesis of a piece of music, its living breath. [...] I trace the splitting of the primal horizontal [the *Urlinie*] in *Prolongationen* [...]. With all this the *cohesiveness of the total content of a piece is given and established as a unity of the background-depth and of the foreground-breadth*.<sup>25</sup> (1930, p. 20-21)

He confirms this in *Der freie Satz*:

The life of the *Urlinie* and of the bass arpeggiation manifests itself not only in the first horizontal succession and in the first arpeggiation, it also broadens itself (*breitet sich*) through the *middleground*, through the situations that I have called the levels of voice-leading and of transformation, the *Prolongationen*, the unfoldings, etc., up to the foreground. However the foreground may unfold in the end, it always is the *Ursatz* of the background and the *middleground* of the transformation levels that guarantee its natural organic life. [...] In the distance from the *Urlinie* to the foreground, from diatony to tonality, the spatial depth of a musical work expresses itself, its distant origin in the simplest, its transformation in the subsequent process and its richness in the foreground. (1935: p. 17)<sup>26</sup>

The American English understanding of “prolongation” stresses the temporal spans, the inscription of degrees and of harmonies in the duration of the work. Schenker, however, in the German term *Prolongation*, denotes the “depth” of the work, the organic relation between background and foreground. This relation is not one of a “lengthening” of the work or of its *Ursatz*, of expanding it in time: the background is an abstraction without duration and its *Prolongation* denotes the continued effect it organically exerts on the foreground.

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25 *Zusammenhang ist das Erste auch in der Musik. Allen Zusammenhanges oberstes geheimnis is aber: Ein Inhalt, im Vordergrund fortlaufend vor uns ausgebreitet, geht in wirklichen Zusammenhang erst ein, wenn es aus einem schon in der Tiefe eines hintergrundes hellseherisch vorausempfunden Zusammenhang kommt. Nur der Tief-Zusammenhang vom Hinter- zum Vordergrunde ist auch der Breite-Zusammenhang in der horizontale des Vordergrundes: ein solcher Zusammenhang macht erst, sogar biologisch genommen, das wirkliche Organische, die Synthese eines Tonstückes, seinen lebendigen Atem aus. [...] Ich verfolge sodann die Aufblätterung der ersten Horizontale in Prolongationen [...]. Mit all dem ist der Zusammenhang des ganzen Inhaltes eines Tonstückes als eine Einheit der Hintergrund-Tiefe und Vordegrund-Breite gegeben und begründet. See also Ian Bent's translation in *The Masterwork in Music III* (1930: p. 7-8). My translation of the last two phrases, slightly different from Bent's translation, was already discussed in Meeüs (2015, p. 108, footnote 14). See also Cook (2007: p. 70-71, p. 165-166, p. 283, etc.), where Schenker's *Prolongation* is correctly described.*

26 *Das Leben der Urlinie und der Baßbrechung drückt sich aber nicht allein in der ersten horizontalen Folge und in der ersten Brechung aus, es breitet sich auch noch durch den Mittelgrund, durch die von mir Stimmführungs-, Verwandlungsschichten, Prolongationen, Auswicklung u. ä. benannten Zustände aus bis hin zum Vordergrund. Wie immer sich ein Vordergrund zuletzt entfalte, immer ist es der Ursatz des Hintergrundes, der Mittelgrund der Verwandlungsschichten, die ihm die Gewähr naturorganischen Lebens bieten. [...] Im Abstand von der Urlinie zum Vordergrund, von der Diatonie zur Tonalität, drückt sich die Rauntiefe eines Musikwerkes aus, die ferne Herkunft vom Allereinfachsten, der Wandel im späteren Verlauf und der Reichtum im Vordergrund. See also Schenker, 1954: p. 28, and 1979: p. 4-5.*



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