

MUTH 301: Assignment 1 on Ethan Haimo,
“Atonality, Analysis, and the Intentional Fallacy”

This assignment covers the first two sections of Ethan Haimo’s article, “Atonality, Analysis, and the Intentional Fallacy”, *Music Theory Spectrum*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1996, pp. 167-199. This is available among the journals in the library, and it can also be found electronically through the library’s website. Finding the article is part of the assignment; if you need help, ask a librarian.

This article strongly critiques a particular application of pitch-class set theory. When you have seen pitch-class set theory used in class, the sets have mainly been fairly small (trichords and tetrachord), and they have been used as a way in to understanding the music, akin in some senses to motivic analysis. We have not generally attempted to explain every note systematically, often using rather large sets. That use of set theory – using large sets, and explaining every note – is associated especially with the prominent music theorist Allen Forte, and it is this way of using set theory (not the more limited use we have seen) that comes under attack by Ethan Haimo.

Read the introduction. The first few paragraphs set the stage, and the final paragraph lays out a road map for Haimo’s article. This roadmap will probably be much easier to follow after you have read more of the article; for now, try to get his main points as well as you can, and return to this passage from time to time if you are losing the big picture of where he is going.

Section I. Here Haimo argues that there is no external evidence that Arnold Schoenberg consciously used set classes in composing the music of his freely atonal period. What does Haimo mean by ‘external evidence’? List the main points of his argument – the kinds of evidence he presents, and how the evidence supports his argument.

Section II. In this section, Haimo sets up the heart of his argument against Forte’s use of set theory. He does so by drawing on an old and important debate within literary criticism, having to do with whether or not the author’s intentions matter when trying to understand a work of art. Haimo attempts to clarify the debate by introducing a distinction, between what he calls type 1 and type 2 statements about authorial intention. Define the two types, and for each type of claim, list the kinds of evidence that would be needed to support it.