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Theorizing Musical Meaning

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Music Theory Spectrum, Volume 23, Issue 2, 1 October 2001, Pages 170–195,
<https://doi.org/10.1525/mts.2001.23.2.170>

Published: 01 October 2001

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Abstract

This article offers a model of musical meaning that allows for the cultural construction of musical meaning, while at the same time acknowledging the existence of constraints upon the meanings any given music may support under any given circumstances; in this way it aims to fill the void between

existing approaches that understand musical meaning as *either* inherent or socially constructed. I illustrate the argument through Tovey's and McClary's contrasting readings of the recapitulation in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and suggest some ways in which theory and analysis may enter into a constructive relationship with the broadened critical agenda of contemporary musicology.

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