

ISE599 – PAPER REVIEW HOMEWORK

The Rhythmic Interpretation of Monophonic Music by H.C. Longuet-Higgins & C.S. Lee

In the introduction of the article, they state that even when the notes are of indefinite pitch, and when the performance is lack of accent, or phrasing the listener may still come up with a rhythmic interpretation of the passage based entirely on the relative durations of the notes.

The main idea lying behind the article is what could be the criteria that might lead a listener to choose a particular rhythmic interpretation of a given sequence of notes against other rhythmic interpretations.

In the first part of the article, they develop a theory of musical rhythms focusing particularly on the rhythms of individual bars and their relationship to the underlying meter. By the progressive application of the realization rules of a given meter, they generate a “tree” structure. On this structure, they illustrate that some rhythmic interpretations are favored instead of others.

The concept of syncopation is addressed in the following section. They define the term, the “weight” of a note or a rest, to explain the syncopation in musical passages. Then they suggest that in assigning a rhythmic interpretation to a sequence of notes the listener tends to avoid interpretations that demand either syncopations within bars or syncopations across bar lines.

They also talk about the perception of higher-level rhythmic structure. Then they mention the role of the performer in clarifying for the listener the rhythmically ambiguous sequences while grouping the notes into phrases by the device of “slurring” together adjacent notes.

In conclusion, they say that listeners don’t realize the rhythmic ambiguity so often in a given sequence of notes. It is important to mention that when a sequence of notes can be interpreted as the realization of an unsyncopated passage, then the listener will interpret the sequence in this way. Phrasing is an important aspect of a performance that affects the perception of the rhythm of a sequence.