

WEEK 4: Elements of Texture: Functional Layers of a Track

Focus: Explicit Beat Layer, but also a basic understanding of the “Functional Bass Layer,” “Melodic Layer,” and “Harmonic Filler Layer.”

Obligatory Reading for Thursday: Moore (2012), “Layers,” pp. 19-28

Tracks:

- “Taxman” (The Beatles, 1966)
- “Chicken Grease” (D’Angelo, 2000)
- “Hard Time” (Ron Sexsmith, 2008)
- “Stare” (Prince, 2015)

You must comment on all four tracks in this playlist.

+ Based on the short reading, select *one track from your repertoire* that explores these functional layers in an interesting way. Look for a track that articulates the beat layer through several elements. We might not be able to go through all examples students bring, but they should be prepared to discuss it in class.

Some questions:

- What musical elements define each functional layer of the song?
- How many instruments—not only percussive—clearly contribute to the functional beat layer?
- How do these extra elements contribute to the beat layer? For instance: do they further emphasize something? do they call attention to another part of the measure?
- How would you label their large-scale form? How does the layers work in relation to the form? Do they change?
- How do you—in your own words, style, and background—engage with the development of texture Moore describes?

Concepts, tools, strategies: Texture, development of texture, explicit beat layer, functional bass layer, melodic layer, and harmonic filler layer.

Project #2: Your compositional exercise for this week is to model the functional layers in the model I provided (below). First you need to the model, think of the elements you want in your composition, and how they articulate the four functions discussed (beat, bass, melody, harmony) throughout the Intro-V-C. Even though the model gives you a guideline for the texture throughout the composition, you will define a style, instrumentation, and the musical ideas. This project must have some beat, harmony, bass, and melody. [File should be uploaded to Blackboard: last name_project1.mp3.]

MELODIC LAYER					
	XXXXXXXXXX	STOPS XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX STOPS	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
HARMONIC FILLER LAYER					
	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
FUNCTIONAL BASS LAYER					
XXXXXXXXXX	STOPS	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
EXPLICIT BEAT LAYER					
XXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX	STOPS STOPS	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX
FORM					
INTRO	VERSE 1	VERSE 2	CHORUS		

Model of texture and functional layers for compositional exercise. Elements of texture: 2 melodic, 2 harmonic, 1 bass element, 2 strictly related to beat.

A few thoughts:

- Try to use the 3 beat elements creatively throughout the composition.
- Melodic, harmonic, and bass elements also participate in the beat layer. You can use them beyond the three strictly related to the beat.