

A few ways to think about analyzing and developing a motive

Rhythmically, this motive is an anacrusis of two short notes off the beat, followed by a longer note on the beat. We'll look at the rhythmic implications in more detail in a bit, but first let's look at the pitches.

Those are all potentially useful serialist ways of thinking of those three pitches, but it's essentially just a different way of saying things we already know how to say just fine in traditional tonal terminology...

If you think of those three notes as a "sonority" or chord, then traditional tonal theory already tells us that inversions of that chord do not change its functional identity.

So let's look at how "ordering", or "inversion", or "voicing" can give new ways to look at things.

As a chord, this set is most obviously described as a quartal or quintal chord (built in 4ths or 5ths rather than 3rds)

But let's see how this set fits into tertiary tonal chords types (I'll use jazz/pop nomenclature, to deal with extended chords)

Note that it takes quite a stretch to consider this set to be part of a chord with Eb or Ab or Bb as the root, since the notes conflict so much with those keys.

On the next page we'll look at superpositions of this set, and then look at development of the rhythmic contents.

Superimposing two such sets a 4th apart yields an extended quartal chord, four pitches that could belong to several different keys or modes

Superimposing three such sets a 4th apart yields a pentatonic scale

Superimposing four such sets a 4th apart yields a diatonic scale, because we're just stacking 4ths after all

Superimposing two such sets a 3rd apart yields a diatonic hexachord (six notes that belong to the same key)

So successive transpositions by a 3rd can have the effect of "modulating" from one tonality to another
C major/A minor
G major/E minor

Gb major/Eb minor
Db major/Bb minor

Take the time to explore what you get when you superimpose sets that are transposed by a M2, m2, or d5

And of course octave transpositions and reorderings can add variety without altering the pitch content

Observe what happens when you alter just one note of the set by a half step

Inverting any set around an axis gives a (usually new) set that has the same interval vector as the original

Diminishing or augmenting all the intervals allows the set to be distorted into almost any other set

As for rhythmic development...

Taking the abstract concept of two short notes off the beat and one long note on the beat, altering the ratios can yield many variations

Changing a motives location within the meter can drastically change its feel

Syncopations of all sorts—anticipation, delay, rushing, lagging, etc.

Classical variation techniques

diminution augmentation rhythmic retrograde complex meter

By recombining these techniques of pitch and rhythm development, a single motive can be logically developed into a literally infinite variety of new forms, retaining internal consistency while providing novelty.