
Intertextuality

J. Peter Burkholder

<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.52853>

Published in print: 20 January 2001

Published online: 2001

A term, coined by the literary critic Julia Kristeva, that encompasses the entire range of relationships between texts, from direct borrowing, reworking or quotation to shared styles, conventions or language. It posits a view of texts, not as independent entities or forms of communication, but as responses to other texts, embedded in a perpetual stream of interrelated texts. Applied to music since the 1980s, it is a broader term than Borrowing, which typically focusses on the use in one piece of one or more elements taken from another. Thus intertextuality embraces the use of a general style or language as well as of a borrowed melody. Moreover, while borrowing is a monodirectional relationship in which one piece borrows from another, intertextuality encompasses mutual relationships, as when two pieces draw on the same convention but neither composer was aware of the other piece.

Musical scholars have used the term in two main contexts: to avoid making historical claims where evidence is uncertain, and to facilitate discussions of musical meaning, especially from a semiotic perspective (see Semiotics). To speak of 'borrowing' is to claim that a composer knew of a certain work and took one or more elements from it in fashioning a new one. When chronology is unclear, the available evidence may not support such a claim. Thus scholars of the isorhythmic motet have used 'intertextuality' to describe similarities in isorhythmic structure that are clearly not accidental, when it cannot be established which motet was written first, or whether there may have been another work, now lost, on which both motets were modelled. Studies of the Renaissance mass and *Magnificat* have used the term to avoid the specific claims implied by 'parody', 'borrowing' and *imitatio*. In studies of more recent music, 'intertextuality' has been used for its breadth and for the connections it suggests to modern literary theory in general. By embracing everything from direct quotation to stylistic allusion and use of conventions, an intertextual approach can address the entire range of ways a musical work refers to or draws on other musical works. Interpreting those relationships as signs within a semiotic theory can illuminate the work's meaning, as can a study of the associations the other music may carry for the listener.

The related terms 'intertextuality' (Hertz, 1993) and 'intermusicality' (Monson, 1996) have been proposed to focus on the characteristics of music as a sounding art and to avoid the implications of the word 'textual' that music can be reduced to a text that must be read. The former allows discussion of relationships between music, the other arts and the realm of ideas, and the latter focusses on music as improvised, performed and heard.

Bibliography

J. Kristeva: *Sēmeiōtikē: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris, 1969)

V. Karbusicky: 'Intertextualität in der Musik', *Dialog der Texte: Hamburg 1982*, ed. W. Schmid (Vienna, 1983), 361–98

R. Hatten: 'The Place of Intertextuality in Music Studies', *American Journal of Semiotics*, 3/4 (1985), 69–82

-
- M. Everist: 'The Refrain Cento: Myth or Motet?', *JRMA*, 114 (1989), 164–88
- R.C. Wegman: 'Another "Imitation" of Busnoys' *Missa L'homme armé* – and some Observations on *Imitatio* in Renaissance Music', *JRMA*, 114 (1989), 189–202
- K. Korsyn: 'Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence', *MAn*, 10 (1991), 3–72
- J.M. Allsen: *Style and Intertextuality in the Isorhythmic Motet 1400–1440* (diss., U. of Wisconsin, 1992)
- J.M. Allsen: 'Intertextuality and Compositional Process in two Cantilena Motets by Hugo de Lantins', *JM*, 11 (1993), 174–202
- C. Clark: 'Intertextual Play and Haydn's *La fedeltà premiata*', *CMc*, no.51 (1993), 59–81
- D.M. Hertz: *Angels of Reality: Emersonian Unfoldings in Wright, Stevens, and Ives* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL, 1993)
- D. Crook: *Orlando di Lasso's Imitation Magnificats for Counter-Reformation Munich* (Princeton, 1994)
- 'Intertextualität', *Musiktheorie*, 9/3 (1994) [articles by M. Wiegandt, M. Flothuis, T. Schäfer and Y. Tokumaru]
- L.B. Robinson: *Mahler and Postmodern Intertextuality* (diss., Yale U., 1994)
- K. Korsyn: 'Directional Tonality and Intertextuality: Brahms's Quintet op. 88 and Chopin's Ballade op. 38', *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, ed. W. Kinderman and H. Krebs (Lincoln, NE, 1996), 45–83
- I. Monson: *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago, 1996)
- A. Houtchens and J.P. Stout: '"Scarce Heard amidst the Guns Below": Intertextuality and Meaning in Charles Ives's War Songs', *JM*, 15 (1997), 66–97

More on this topic

Intertextuality (USA) <<http://oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002241764>> in Oxford Music Online <<http://oxfordmusiconline.com>>