complex than that described by Dr. TarrKrüger. The book includes an extensive bibli-
ography with approximately twenty percent of the titles in English and the remainder in
German.

Certainly, much of the material in Performance Power has become available in
other books, articles, and even television programs; nevertheless, it is helpful to have
information on so many concepts and exercises available in one compact source. Over-
all, Performance Power should prove both accessible and useful to college students,
helping them understand the conflicts that arise between self-criticism and self-esteem.
The book is ideally suited to a performance class setting or for use in connection with
applied instrumental and vocal instruction. Performance Power deserves a place on ev-
ery performer and performance teacher’s bookshelf.

John Covach.

Very early in his most recent book, Allen Forte clearly articulates its purpose: “to
offer a detailed and in-depth study of a small number of fine songs composed in the
vernacular of American popular music during the extraordinary period I refer to as the
Golden Era” (p. 4). It will come as no surprise to anyone familiar with musical analysis
that Forte, a founding member of the Society for Music Theory and its first President,
has written a book crammed full of carefully considered analyses: indeed, Forte is among
a handful of senior figures in the field of music theory who have made their reputations
by writing in an often complex—though, just as often, compelling—manner. His ana-
lytical and theoretical writing has played an important role in establishing music theory
as a vital area of research within musical scholarship. Allen Forte has tended to be
known as a tireless advocate of pitch-class set and Schenkerian theory; and the musical
objects of his careful attention have always tended to be works from the European art-
music tradition from Bach to Webern. It may come as something of a surprise to some,
therefore, to find Forte writing here not just on American music, but on American
popular music. But this is just what he has done, and he has written a book that I believe
will become a classic analytical study of the American ballad of the Golden Era.

In considering this important book, let us turn our attention first to its organization.
Forte’s book can be divided up roughly into three parts: the first seven chapters provide
introductions to various aspects of the music-analytic interpretations that will follow;
the next six chapters are each devoted to the ballads of individual composers; and finally
two chapters, each devoted to a different collection of composers, as well as a fourth
chapter devoted to concluding reflections, close the book. In the first part of the work,
Forte follows his Introduction with chapters addressing elements of harmony, rhythm,
melody, lyrics, and form; his discussion is rounded off with a discussion of “the large-

scale view,” which summarizes the Schenkerian principles of tonal-syntactical structure
that will form the analytical background against which the songs will be interpreted. I
think that most readers will find these chapters very useful, though I would expect, as Forte does, that they will need to have had a least a year of college-level harmony to negotiate this theoretical terrain. But equipped with that level of music-theoretical experience—which, after all, would include the majority of current music majors and minors, as well as all those who have graduated from such undergraduate programs—the reader should find that these chapters prepare the ground quite nicely for the material that follows.

The real heart of Forte’s book is in the chapters devoted to the composers he considers to be the “big six” for this repertory: Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, George Gershwin, Richard Rogers, and Harold Arlen. Each receives his own chapter, and each of these contains six analyses. Chapters begin with short biographical introductions to the composer and his time; the order of these chapters is organized according to the birthdates of the composers, and the analyses of individual songs are ordered chronologically within each chapter. This equitable arrangement betrays a fundamental interpretive attitude that pervades the book: while Forte has decided that each song considered is worthy of the kind of close reading he supplies, and therefore has made a kind of comparative judgement about what to include and exclude (though he states that this was done only with great difficulty), he meticulously avoids comparing songs or their composers with one another, except to show general kinds of similarities of possible influence. Thus there is no attempt to provide an interpretive path either across the six chapters, or within any of the chapters; the analyses are there for the reader to explore, but no arguments are offered in any substantial manner about a certain composer’s development or even about the development of the repertory (though Forte does pause briefly at various points to suggest that there are, in fact, such worthwhile issues and that these could be taken up fruitfully).

The last section of the book contains analyses of songs—one each—by eighteen additional composers. The first of these collective chapters examines the ballads of Richard Whiting, Walter Donaldson, Harry Warren, Jimmy McHugh, Vincent Youmans, Duke Ellington, and Kurt Weill; all of these composers, except for Weill (b. 1900), were born before 1900. The second group chapter discusses the ballads of Hoagy Carmichael, Arthur Schwartz, Vernon Duke, John Green, Burton Lane, and Jimmy Van Heusen; all of these composers, except for Carmichael (b. 1899), were born after 1900. A third chapter discusses the ballads of five women composers: Kay Swift, Bernice Petkere, Ann Ronelle, Dana Suesse, and Ruth Lowe. Within each chapter the songs are discussed in order of publication date, and this arrangement further reflects the attitude of interpretive impartiality mentioned above. Forte does separate out the women composers, however, drawing them together into a single chapter. He seems sensitive to the possibility that some readers may feel an explanation for such a grouping is in order. He writes: “Because of the relatively small number of women songwriters no useful purpose would have been served by integrating them into the previous chapters’ chronological plan . . . The women would then be filed with the men, which is one of the reasons they were lost in the first place; they were submerged in a field dominated by males” (p. 310). Taking his chapters on the “big six” together with the three devoted to eighteen other composers, then, Forte offers close analytical readings of fifty-four ballads. His collection of songs
for discussion provides a nice survey of the repertory, and his analyses are the most sustained and sophisticated that this music has received to date.

In the final chapter of the book, "Concluding Reflections," Forte brings together some of the ideas that he has been following over the course of this study. While his focus has not been on accounting for stylistic change and development, defining personal compositional styles, or offering critical judgements of the pieces he considers, his careful and detailed approach to the analysis of these songs has carried with it a crucial interpretive "prejudice" (here understood in Hans-Georg Gadamer's sense of the term), and he now articulates this directly. In a section of the last chapter he has entitled "Deeper Aspects of Style," Forte writes:

From the standpoint of this book, the most important of what I have dubbed the "deeper aspects of style" are those melodic structures of larger scale that organize the smaller components (phrases, motives) and harmonies (individual sonorities and harmonic progressions) to create formal blocks that we know as verse and refrain (comprising chorus and bridge). These large-scale structures may configure as stepwise-linear successions, as scalar profiles (as in the case of the pentatone), or as projections of indigenous harmonic formations, such as the minor seventh chord. Whatever may be their external form, they contribute in the most elemental fashion to the shaping of the ballad and to its detailed effects, often down to the level of the setting of the individual components of the lyrics.

In this paragraph Forte offers his justification for the fifty-four detailed analyses that occur across the previous nine chapters: understanding these songs—and by extension, the repertory—requires realizing that there is more to them than pretty melodies, snazzy harmonies, and clever lyrics; careful analysis reveals that these songs are structured hierarchically, and that the deeper levels of organization behind the "surface" of the music can be discovered through reductive analysis.

My guess is that Forte's Schenkerian approach to these songs will be somewhat controversial in both traditional musical scholarship and popular-music studies. Traditional musical scholarship has tended—until very recently, at least—to ignore popular music; pop has, in some cases, figured into considerations of art music in a subordinate way, but it has tended not to be a central focus of research. Those who have done work in popular music have tended not to subject the music to much detailed musical analysis—or, again, not until very recently—and few who have attempted such analysis of popular music have possessed the analytical experience and sophistication that Forte brings to his project. The sticking point for many who might resist Forte's analytical approach will be his use of Schenkerian graphs. I have heard it argued several times at conferences over the last few years (during dinner sessions and in the hallways) that graphing a popular song constitutes an act of "legitimation": such a graph irons out all of the surface subtlety into the bland 3-2-1 of the Schenkerian middleground. And on the other side of the disciplinary aisle, there are those who will wonder whether popular music such as these ballads is ever worthy of this kind of detailed consideration: the
charm of this music, it might be argued, is its simplicity; why attempt to make it more interesting through complicated voice-leading graphs? (I have dealt with the issues that underlie these kind of attitudes elsewhere, so I will spare the reader a recapitulation of those discussions here.) Forte does briefly address such potential objections. Early in the book, for instance, he states that these ballads “are inherently attractive and eminently worthy of serious appreciation” (p. 4). And while in the final pages of his study he again comments on such issues, these paragraphs merely acknowledge that these matters require further thought and discussion.

Forte’s use of Schenkerian analysis, as it turns out, is quite flexible; in every instance he seems to be more concerned that he remain faithful to the structure of the song itself rather than bend the analysis to conform to normative Schenkerian models. Already in Chapter Seven the reader can find some unusual middleground structures: example 41 (“Skylark” by Carmichael and Mercer), for instance, takes scale-degree six as the primary tone, and Forte comments that this occurs often in popular melodies of the Golden Era (pp. 48-49). This, of course, departs from Schenker’s theory, in which only scale degrees three, five, or eight (viewed as an octave above the first scale degree) may serve as primary tones. There are, of course, some songs that conform closely to a normative Schenkerian middleground; Forte takes scale-degree three as the primary tone of George and Ira Gershwin’s “Someone to Watch Over Me,” and this third scale degree is prolonged in characteristic ways throughout the song, descending through the second degree to the first degree at the final cadence with the normative tonic-dominant-tonic harmonic support (pp. 153-156).

Forte’s reading of Richard Rodgers’s and Lorenz Hart’s classic “My Funny Valentine” is especially interesting (pp. 196-202). The piece poses the problem—for a Schenkerian, at least—of being mostly in c minor but closing in E> major: it fits nicely into the 32-bar template of four eight-bar phrases arranged in an A-A-B-A configuration (the last phrase in this song includes a four-bar extension, making it twelve measures in length and extending the song to thirty-six bars altogether). The first eight-bar phrase is squarely in c minor, while the second turns toward E> major at the cadence. The bridge (mm. 17-24) is in E> major, turning back toward c minor for the last twelve bars (mm. 25-36). Forte opts for an analysis that posits only a single deep middleground structural melodic tone, E>, which is the goal of the melody reached in measure 31 at the very climax of the song (E> is also the melodic apex of the song). His example 214 clearly privileges the melodic dimension of the song, and his other analytical sketches (exs. 210 and 213) avoid positing a deep middleground linear progression of any kind. There is a perhaps more strictly Schenkerian interpretation of the song. One could posit a G as the primary tone in E> that receives harmonic support from VI (c minor) in the first eight-bar phrase; the ascent that Forte graphs to the important E> (m. 31) could be taken as a movement to an inner-voice E> a third below, here composed out as an ascending sixth. Forte graphs a third-progression in E> in the song’s final four measure (G-F-E>) and this might then constitute the deep middleground descent of the primary tone. Forte is not much interested in this kind of tonal problem in his analysis of this song, however; his main focus is on the expansion of the motive in bars 1-8 in bars 25-31, and on the overall trajectory of the melody to the crucial Eb in measure 31. And for Forte, the drive toward
and arrival of this important melodic pitch is perfectly coordinated with the second “stay” from the climactic lyric “Stay, little Valentine, stay!” Forte’s analysis, then, is hardly an attempt to force a “simple” popular song into the Procrustean bed of Schenkerian analysis.

Forte is concerned throughout his book with relating the lyrics of each song to developments in its harmonic-contrapuntal structure. There is perhaps no better example in the book that his discussion of Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg’s “Over the Rainbow.” As Forte’s example 250 shows, the first eight bars of this song constitute an elegantly rendered stepwise octave descent from scale-degree one in Eb major. Here is Forte’s description of the poetic interaction of lyric and musical structure:

In other contexts one might be tempted to describe the opening octave leap in the melody as simply an Arlen trademark and let it go at that. Here, however, the octave leap is a musical emblem of the song; more particularly, it is closely and obviously associated with the text’s metaphor, “over the rainbow,” as Dorothy’s dreams soar skyward.

Indeed, the octave space that the initial leap opens . . . provides the key to the long-range design. Over the span of chorus 1’s eight-bar period, the melodic line slowly descends, filling in the octave from c2 to e1, bringing little Dorothy back down to the parched earth of Kansas in the terrible drought period of the 1930s (p. 232).

Forte reveals here—as he does in many examples throughout the book—that middleground structure and lyrics combine to provide a richly poetic musical experience.

The analyses in this book go a long way toward demonstrating two key points: that popular music can be very interesting as music (and thus, not only as cultural artifact); and that the analysis of popular music raises interesting questions about analysis generally (as evinced in Forte’s positing of the sixth scale degree as a primary tone). As such, this book will be especially welcomed by those of us who have been advocates for putting more musical analysis into popular-music studies as well as for putting more popular music into analytical studies. It is clear throughout the book that Forte knows this music intimately, that he loves it dearly, and that he has lived with it for a long time.

And, of course, Allen Forte is one of the leading music analysts of our time. The result of applying his analytical expertise to a repertory he knows and loves is a book that will soon become a seminal work in the study of American popular music.


Professor Kirby has done it! The task of creating a comprehensive text that deals in some depth with the literature for the piano has been attempted by numerous authors. Even Kirby’s own previous effort, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York. The Free Press, 1966), fell into the category of books which achieved an impressive partial