



The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory (Oxford Handbooks)

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Topics are musical signs that rely on associations with different genres, styles, and types of music making. The concept of topics was introduced by Leonard Ratner in the 1980s to account for cross-references between eighteenth-century styles and genres. While music theorists and critics were busy classifying styles and genres, defining their affects and proper contexts for their usage, composers started crossing the boundaries between them and using stylistic conventions as means of communication with the audience. Such topical mixtures received negative evaluations from North-German critics but became the hallmark of South-German music, which engulfed the Viennese classicism. Topic theory allows music scholars to gain access to meaning and expression of this music. *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* consolidates this field of research by clarifying its basic concepts and exploring its historical foundations.

The volume grounds the concept of topics in eighteenth-century music theory, aesthetics, and criticism. Documenting historical reality of individual topics on the basis of eighteenth-century sources, it relates topical analysis to other methods of music analysis conducted from the perspectives of composers, performers, and listeners. With a focus on eighteenth-century musical repertoire, *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* lays the foundation under further investigation of topics in music of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

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