

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES IN MUSIC THEORY

“Historical Hermeneutics Revisited: Schubert’s Biography, Music Analysis and the Narrative Impulse”



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4:15 p.m.

Hart Recital Hall, Music Building

Free and open to the public.

BIO:

René Rusch is assistant professor of music theory at the University of Michigan. Prior to joining the faculty at U-M in 2015, she taught at the Schulich School of Music, McGill University, from 2007–2015. In addition to specializing in the music of Franz Schubert, René’s research interests include 19th-century chromaticism, Schenkerian theory, and jazz theory. Her work appears in several journals, including the *Journal of Music Theory*, *Music Analysis*, *Music Theory and Analysis* (formally the *Dutch Journal for Music Theory*) and *Music Theory Online*. She is currently working on a book project, provisionally titled *Schubert’s Instrumental Music and the Poetics of Interpretation*.

ABSTRACT:

How have the shifts in our understanding of Schubert’s life and of our own cultural condition affected the ways in which we narrativize musical events in his instrumental works? I consider this question first in light of recent scholarship on music and narrative, as a means to take into account one role that music analysts can play in their writings about Schubert’s music—as narrators who define the agents and actions in instrumental works and explain how these phenomena are related through cause and effect, so as to communicate their possible significance. I then explore some of the narrative strategies used in hermeneutic analyses of Schubert’s instrumental works. Here I suggest that the proposed revisions to the composer’s biography amid a burgeoning cultural pluralism have modified the ways in which we ascribe an outcome to our emplotment of musical events in these works. Drawing from the writings of Hayden White (1973 and 1987), my paper concludes by considering the value of narrativity in our analyses of Schubert’s music.

