



# Towards a Diachronic Music Theory

## Fact Sheet

### Project Information

**DIACHRONY**

Grant agreement ID: 101171427

**DOI**  
[10.3030/101171427](https://doi.org/10.3030/101171427)

**EC signature date**  
7 February 2025

<b>Start date</b>	<b>End date</b>
1 October 2025	30 September 2030


**Funded under**  
European Research Council (ERC)

**Total cost**  
€ 2 000 000,00

**EU contribution**  
€ 2 000 000,00

**Investment in EU policy priorities**

Digital agenda	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Clean air	<input type="radio"/>
Artificial Intelligence	<input type="radio"/>	Climate action	<input type="radio"/>
Biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>		

**Coordinated by**  
**THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM**  
 Israel

## Objective

This proposal argues for a quantum shift in the way we theorize about music. In the past three decades, music theory has been dominated by synchronic theories based upon typologies. The value of these theories notwithstanding, there are three significant “blindspots” that arise from a purely synchronic perspective. First,

synchronic approaches are incapable of explaining trends – they at best capture “snapshots” along a timeline, but cannot explain processes: how one snapshot progressed to another. Second, music written between two snapshots is evaluated in synchronic approaches either according to a defunct model, or according to one that had not yet come into existence, as often occurs with the music of the generation between Bach and Mozart. Third, such snapshots mask trends during their period of interest behind a false façade of stability.

I propose to address this problem through a diachronic methodology, designed to focus not on definitions and synchronic typologies, but rather on processes of change over time. To this end I will carry out a corpus study of unprecedented scope, covering 1700 works between 1680-1819. In two overlapping subprojects based upon the same corpus, I will examine trends in four fields: large-scale form; phrase structure; cadences (musical units signifying closure); and schemata (stock musical phrases).

Tracing the diachronic process of change across the decades of the corpus, I will reveal the forces that propelled music from one style to another, and through this, the tensions with which composers were faced and to which they responded. Furthermore, my novel diachronic approach will enable a more flexible mode of accounting for the fuzzy limits of theoretical definitions and histories. Lastly, with its original conceptual premises and its corpus-based methodology, this project will serve as a model for a new approach to music theory, encouraging the embrace of a diachronic perspective in other fields of music theory too.

## Fields of science (EuroSciVoc)

[humanities](#) > [history and archaeology](#) > [history](#)

[humanities](#) > [arts](#) > [musicology](#)



## Keywords

[Eighteenth-century music](#)

[corpus studies](#)

[music theory](#)

[cadences](#)

[schema theory](#)

[Sonata Form](#)

[Formenlehre](#)

## Programme(s)

## Topic(s)

[ERC-2024-COG - ERC CONSOLIDATOR GRANTS](#)

## Call for proposal

[ERC-2024-COG](#)

[See other projects for this call](#)

## Funding Scheme

[HORIZON-ERC - HORIZON ERC Grants](#)

## Host institution



**THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM**

Net EU contribution

**€ 2 000 000,00**

Total cost

**€ 2 000 000,00**

Address

**EDMOND J SAFRA CAMPUS GIVAT RAM**

**91904 Jerusalem**

 **Israel** 

Activity type

**Higher or Secondary Education Establishments**

Links

[Contact the organisation](#)  [Website](#) 

[Participation in EU R&I programmes](#) 

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## Beneficiaries (1)



## THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

 Israel

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Total cost

**€ 2 000 000,00**

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