ABSTRACT

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Happiness Is... a Good Transcription – Reconsidering the Beatles Sheet Music Publications
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The thesis consists of six articles written during 1998-2006, a resume, and five appendices (3 full score transcriptions, one chart, and a CD). There are four main topics in the study: a) how the available sheet music publications have succeeded in transcribing the music of the Beatles, b) what the main problems are in making a good transcription, c) how the music of the Beatles has been arranged, especially from the variation point of view, and d) how accurate a critical review it is possible to present of the story of Northern Songs Ltd. Both sheet music publications and arrangements are neglected themes in popular music research. In spite of the huge amount of Beatles literature published, there are practically no previous academic studies concentrating specifically on these topics. The lack of relevant studies was one of the key motivations for carrying out this research project. Due to the large number of songs the Beatles have released on records and the huge amount of sheet music publications of them, the research was carried out as a series of case studies. As for comparison of sheet music publications, the following two songs were chosen: 'Happiness Is A Warm Gun' (since its rhythmic complexity) and 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' (since its harmonic complexity). 'Cry Baby Cry' was the song chosen for the study of arrangement. Because it appeared that there were no reliable sheet music publications of the case songs, the only solution was to start with making new transcriptions. During the making of the transcriptions, a new method, Simultranscribe, was discovered. This method involves the simultaneous use of the record and the notation software and it proved to be a great help in making the transcriptions. The analysis of sheet music publications showed that many of them lack reliability and certainly leave a lot to be desired. The results also suggest that variation was surely one of the key principles in the arrangements of the Beatles, at least as far as the years 1967-68 are considered. Because of copyright reasons, the appendices consisting of the full scores of the three songs ('Cry Baby Cry', 'Happiness Is A Warm Gun', 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds') are not included in the Internet version of the thesis, and neither is the CD, which is attached to the printed version of the dissertation.

Keywords: The Beatles, transcription, sheet music publication, arrangement, variation, rhythm, harmony, Northern Songs Ltd