

November 5, 2007

An imaginary piece in A major:

- Imagine a short piece in the key of A major. This piece modulates to E major (the key of the dominant) before the repeat line. What key(s) might one find after the repeat?
 - After the repeat, it is common for a piece to continue in the dominant key and then modulate to the subdominant key (vi). In an A-major piece, this would be the key of F \sharp minor.
 - It is unlikely that the piece would modulate to F \sharp major because it is too remote. In other words there are too many different pitches when comparing A major to F \sharp major. Pieces in this style do not typically modulate to distant keys (that being a later development in the history of Western music).

An imaginary piece in C minor:

- Now imagine a similar piece beginning in the key of C minor. Is it likely that the piece would modulate to G major (V)?
 - No. As with F \sharp major in the example above, G major is too distantly related to be a common modulatory goal. (C minor and G major share only three out of seven pitches.)
- Instead, it is far more likely that the piece would modulate to G minor (a key with a difference of only one pitch: A \flat instead of A \flat).
- To explain this, one need only think of what type of minor scale a piece “is in.” A piece in C minor uses the pitches of the natural C minor scale (as indicated by the key signature). Using only the natural minor pitches, we see that the chord built on scale degree $\hat{5}$ is actually a minor triad. In certain circumstances, a raised scale degree $\hat{7}$ is used to create a leading tone in minor. This depends on what kind of function is needed. If a dominant function is needed, for example, a composer will raise scale degree $\hat{7}$ to create leading tone, giving the V chord the required pull back to tonic.
- Confusion arises when a cadence in the minor dominant ends up on a major chord. This is the result of a Picardy third (a raised third in a chord, used to create a major sonority). Do not be seduced! This is merely an alteration of a minor chord (the tonic of a minor key) and does not reflect the mode of the key.

More on Beethoven, op. 18/6/ii

- (page 29 in the anthology)
- The A section:
 - In m. 16, there is a PAC in E \flat major. This strong cadence in the home key indicates—for one thing—that the piece is probably not in binary form. (In a typical binary form, the first section would end with a similarly strong cadence, but in a different key such as the dominant.)
- The B section:
 - The B section begins with the upbeat to m. 17 with a new melody that is clearly in the key of E \flat minor. It is quite common for the B section of a ternary form to be in the parallel minor (and less likely for it to be in the dominant key).
 - The first phrase of the B section quickly modulates to B \flat minor via scalar manipulation in m. 18 leading to a PAC in m. 20. The phrase is repeated (with decoration) in mm. 21-24.
 - In m. 25, we find a version of the new melody in G \flat major (the relative major of E \flat minor, the key of the B section) in the cello. The G \flat major material doesn't last long, however, and by m. 26 the melody is back where it should be, in the key of E \flat minor.

- On the downbeat of m. 28, there is a particularly “juicy” chord (F^b, A^b, and C^b). This is a Neapolitan chord in the key of E^b minor. Provocative sonorities such as this one are often used to signal important cadences (remember the German augmented sixth chord in m. 21 of Beethoven’s op. 18/2/ii?). This is the first of three cadences that close off the B section (hinting that we’re coming to the end of the section):
 - m. 32: deceptive cadence
 - m. 34: half cadence

A quick word on sonata form:

- Sonata form is basically an extension of binary form. Evidence of these origins can be found in the fact that the A section of a sonata form (the exposition) ends in the dominant or relative major key. Remember that a binary form has a first section that ends with a strong cadence in a key other than the tonic (usually the dominant or the relative major).
- A piece whose A section ends in the home key, on the other hand, is much more likely to be in ternary form. (Ternary form have A sections that are harmonically self-contained.)

Chopin, op. 48/1

- (page 33 in the anthology)
- This piece is in C minor and modulates to the key of its dominant (G minor) by m. 8:
 - m. 4: IAC in C minor
 - m. 8: PAC in G minor
- The A section ends in the home key:
 - m. 16: HC in E^b major (the relative major)
 - m. 24: PAC in C minor
- The B section of the piece is in C major (the parallel major) and contrasts in many ways from the opening and closing A sections. (Different key, different tempo, different texture, etc.)
- The A section returns in m. 50. This time around, it is altered slightly and continues some of the momentum built up in the B section.
- The final cadence happens before the end of the pieces, allowing Chopin to include the tragic ending that concludes the piece.

Assignment:

- There will be a third quiz on Friday (November 9).
- Read the chapter on sonata form in your textbook.