PART I

Methodological orientation: the mazurkas

1 The architecture of a tonic pillar: twenty-seven regular tonic pillars from the mazurkas

Chopin's mazurkas are admired especially for their harmonic creativity. As Jim Samson suggests, "Chopin reserved for the mazurkas some of his most astonishing harmonic adventures, at times almost to the point of iconoclasm."[1] Our substantial investment of time and energy in these works over three chapters should offer the dividend of a striking and vivid perspective regarding Chopin's harmonic practice over the course of his career as a composer.

All of the forty-three mazurkas that Chopin published during his lifetime contain at least one regular tonic pillar, which is built from a phrase or group of phrases that concludes with a PAC in the mazurka's tonic key. Though usually the tonic chord will occur at or near the beginning of a tonic pillar, a delayed initial tonic is a viable alternative, as long as I is established eventually and the progression then leads through V back to I for the cadence. The initial tonic might exceptionally occur during an introduction or only in the listener's imagination (as will be explained in due course), in which cases the tonic pillar may be already engaged in the progression to the local dominant at its outset.

The twenty-seven mazurkas that we explore in chapters 1 and 2 are distinguished from the sixteen that are deferred until chapter 3 by the fact that all of their tonic pillars (between two and four will occur within one mazurka) are regular. An irregular pillar will cadence on the tonic without a concurrent descent to $\hat{1}$ (IAC) or on the dominant (HC) or the mediant, or it will be presented in a key other than the tonic. In all such cases a pillar later in the mazurka will conclude with a PAC in the tonic key and thus will be regular.

Chapter 1 offers a detailed assessment of how twenty-seven regular tonic pillars are constructed. Five broad categories are proposed to account for Chopin's range of structures: uninterrupted third-progressions, uninterrupted fifth-progressions, interrupted third-progressions, interrupted fifth-progressions, and exceptional cases. How these pillars fit within the architecture of their respective mazurkas will be explored in chapter 2.

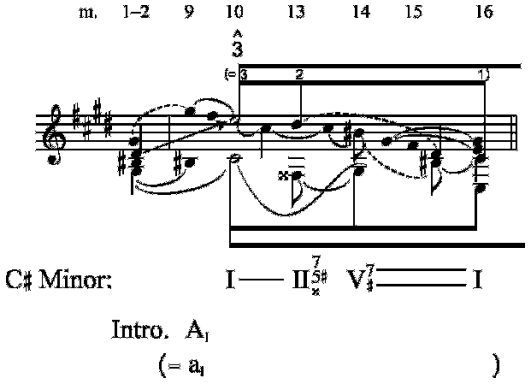
Uninterrupted third-progressions

As is common in tonal music of this era, the projection of the tonic key in one of Chopin's mazurkas often is accomplished through the stepwise filling-in of the tonic triad's lower third – for example, E>D>C in C Major – supported by a harmonic progression that proceeds from I through V back to I. Though the ten tonic pillars explored in this section all convey these structural features, they nevertheless offer a considerable variety in terms of how these foundational chords are embellished and connected. Though II or IV often serves as an intermediary between I and V, in some cases Chopin proceeds directly from I to V or pursues a sequential trajectory rather than relying on one of those harmonic resources.

Opus 6/2

The Mazurka in C♯ Minor's eight-measure introduction projects a B♯<D♯ melodic third, covered by a static G♯. Invigorated by dissonant F♯ at 9_2 (as the A_1 section gets underway), these elements yield to the tonic's E>C♯ third, covered by G♯. The stemmed notes above the bass in **1.1** reveal the first-species foundation of A_1's linear strands: thirds $\frac{E}{C♯}$ and $\frac{D♯}{B♯}$ converge upon the cadence's unison C♯. An element from fourth species – C♯'s delay in descending to B♯ – is here supported harmonically by II➔, enhancing the foundational I V♯ I progression. (Whereas the full inventory of an evolved harmony's chromatic elements and added dissonances generally will be displayed beside its Roman numeral below the graph, a shorthand notation such as the solid arrow, which indicates that the harmony has taken on dominant-emulating characteristics, often will appear in the textual commentary. In this case Chopin has replaced C♯ Minor's diatonic supertonic, D♯-F♯-A, with a much more dynamic, dominant-targeting alternative, D♯-F𝄪-A♯-C♯. Whereas some analysts would elect to interpret this chord as diatonic in the context of the chord of its resolution $-V^7$ of V♯ – it is interpreted here as a chromatic chord within C♯ Minor, with Roman II indicating that the second scale degree serves as the root.) The melody's downward shift during V♯, restoring the register of the introduction, adds vitality to the presentation and motivates further registral fluctuation as the mazurka continues. The essence of the tonic pillar's structure is not compromised by the presentation of its third-progression spread over a tenth or by the sounding of inner-strand pitches G♯ and E above the melodic descent's C♯ goal. (Chopin emphasizes the C♯ by notating G♯ as a grace note and introducing E on beat two.) Because the

Example 1.1 Analysis of Mazurka in C♯ Minor (op. 6/2), mm. 1–16.

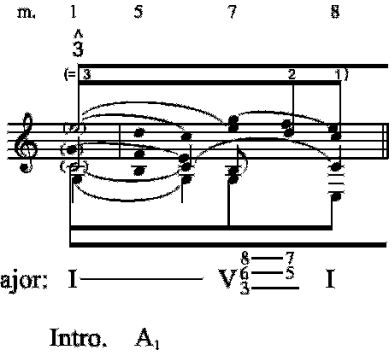


mazurka continues beyond the tonic pillar, the third-progression (spread over a tenth) is interpreted as motion to the interior of the texture, consequently extending $\hat{3}$, which serves as the *Kopfton* (literally "head tone"), the pitch from which the mazurka's deep structural descent – the ultimate tonic-confirming event – will emanate. Successors to $\hat{3}$ at both the middleground and background levels emerge later (in measures 17 and 42), as we shall see in chapter 2.

Opus 6/5 [a.k.a. opus 7/5]

The first-species framework that Chopin deploys during the tonic pillar of his Mazurka in C Major is identical to the one we noted in opus 6/2. Stemmed notes in **1.2** reveal the interaction between E>D>C above and C>B<C below. A C–G–C bass arpeggiation supports those lines. In this case the upper strand's E invokes a fourth-species delay at 7_{1-2} and a G>F>E descant in measures 7 and 8 hovers above the principal line, similar to G♯>F♯>E in measures 14 through 16 of opus 6/2 [**1.1**].[2] That contrapuntal structure likewise prevails at the foreground level to project the pillar's opening tonic harmony. (The *Kopfton* imagined at the outset is stated during the second local E>D>C descent, which extends from 5_3 through 6_3.) The repetition of the pillar, beginning in measure 9, both rescinds the upper-octave hoist of goal C (compare measures 8 and 12) and segues into the B section by destabilizing the goal tonic via a 5–6 shift (G to A in measure 12).[3] As numerous later examples will confirm, the tonic's fifth often will shift to its sixth as a means of segueing between the tonic and the supertonic, which in this case is realized as II➔ (D-F♯-A-C in measure 13, to be discussed in chapter 2).

Example 1.2 Analysis of Mazurka in C Major (op. 6/5), mm. 1–8.

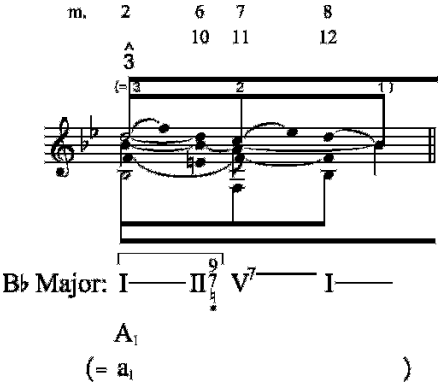


My assertion that the introduction conveys a tonic root and *Kopfton* $\hat{3}$ (displayed within parentheses in **1.2**) may be disconcerting. (Such bold assertions are a hallmark of *imaginative* analytical thinking, which contrasts a *literalist* perspective.[4]) Because an E (during 8_1) precedes the upper-strand D in the repetition beginning at 9_1, I retrospectively import that context to what precedes 5_1. In this case the initial tonic is unconventionally presented in $^{6}_{4}$ position. Interpreting the solo G of measures 1 through 4 as a tonic harmony depends upon a careful assessment of the broader context. A comparison with another mazurka – opus 30/3 – reveals how Chopin will sometimes lead from a lone fifth scale degree into a robust tonic chord during an introduction. In opus 6/5 that evolution is elided. My proposed C and E project what I understand Chopin to have imagined as the opening chordal structure, represented meagerly by pitch G.[5]

Opus 7/1

The high spirits that Chopin conveys in his Mazurka in B♭ Major result in part from the persistent refusal of the melody to be confined by the line that traverses the pillar's middleground $\underline{\hat{3}} > \hat{2} > \hat{1}$ structural descent (depicted in **1.3**). An upper third coordinates with each of these elements, and even greater heights are attained as well. For example, the F of 2_3, already a third above the structural D, is embellished by neighbor G in measure 3, during a $^{5-6-5}_{3-4-3}$ expansion of the tonic. (The $^{6}_{4}$ is unfurled, with E♭ sounding in the bass. An unfurling is defined as a chordal reconfiguration involving the substitution of a different bass note for the one that characteristically would occur.) This G is embellished by upper-third B♭ before F returns.

Example 1.3 Analysis of Mazurka in B♭ Major (op. 7/1), mm. 1–12.



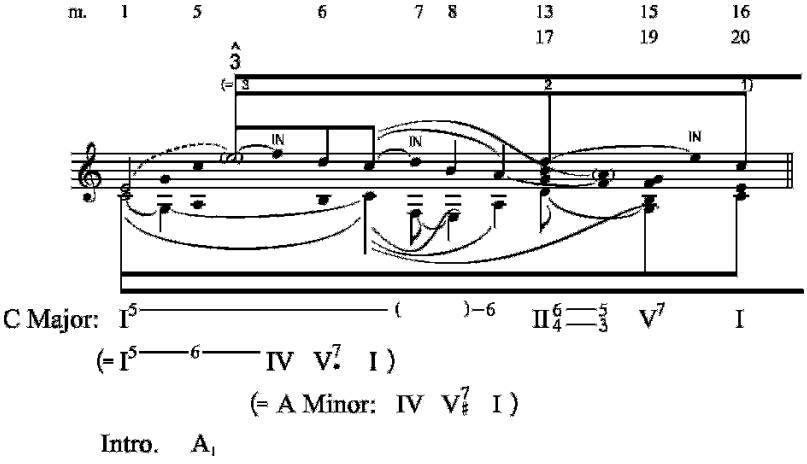
Also, whereas an E♭ neighbor to *Kopfton* D sounds as a grace note at 5_1 before upper third G emerges, the corresponding spot in measure 9, during a varied repetition of the latter part of the phrase, attains greater heights by dispensing with the E♭. The persistent upward striving impacts even the close of the $\underline{\hat{3}} > \hat{2} > \hat{1}$ descent: B♭ sounds an octave higher than expected in measure 8 (though not in measure 12).

A collision occurs when two successive syntactic entities are juxtaposed during the same moment in time, as in measure 6. Whereas the left hand persists in projecting the initial tonic, the E♮ that joins with B♭ and D in the right hand projects II➔ (here with omitted root: E♮-(G)-B♭-D is interpreted as a dominant-emulating evolution of the diatonic supertonic, C-E♭-G). The collision is conveyed in the harmonic analysis by placing a bracket above Roman numerals I and II. Whereas II➔ in opus 6/2 [**1.1**] is spelled as D♯-F𝄪-A♯-C♯, in opus 7/1 the octave of the supertonic root C is displaced by ninth D, resulting in a chord spelled as E♮-(G)-B♭-D. (In the full inventory of chordal elements beside Roman numeral II in the graph, a bullet (•) indicates that the root has been omitted.) Chopin here takes advantage of the fact that B♭ and D are members of both the I and the II➔ harmonies in B♭ Major.

Opus 24/2

The Mazurka in C Major's introduction provides the venue for the initial sounding of the tonic harmony. By the time A_1 commences at 5_1, the progression has already proceeded to the tonic's 6-phase chord within a local expansion of I-space [**1.4**]. Some imaginative thinking is called for in

Example 1.4 Analysis of Mazurka in C Major (op. 24/2), mm. 1–20.



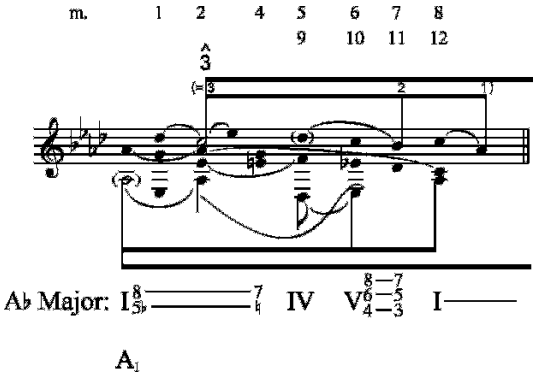
measure 5, since the upper E within an E<G<C<E arpeggiation to the *Kopfton* is elided to make way for the subdominant's F. (Note the parentheses in **1.4**. The score presents the E<F voice leading an octave lower.) The local IV V^7 I progression that extends the initial tonic through 6_3 is deployed again immediately thereafter to provide similar support for the tonic's 6-phase chord, which is secured at 8_3.

Chopin divides the tonic pillar's broad harmonic progression into two segments, each repeated. The initiating $I^{5–6}$ transpires during the introduction and the first half of A_1 (wherein the written-out repeat during measures 9 through 12 does not recapture the tonic's initial 5-phase chord), whereas the continuation II V^7 I transpires during the second half of A_1. Observe in **1.4** how G and B at the downbeat of measure 13 function as accented passing notes that delay the full flowering of II, rather than asserting the arrival of V.[6]

Opus 24/3

An unfolded G<D♭ diminished fifth during measure 1 energizes the opening of the Mazurka in A♭ Major, which announces the tonic through the melodic unfolding of its signature A♭<C third from 0_3 through 2_1 [**1.5**]. (Though the A♭ sounds without chordal support, it nevertheless represents the tonic: G is neighbor to A♭, not the reverse.) Upper third E♭, which corresponds to similar thirds preceding or following the arrival of $\hat{3}$ in most of the mazurkas we have explored thus far, soon emerges. By the end of measure 4 the tonic surges towards IV. (I often use the word surge – both noun and verb – to denote a dominant-emulating transformation. Here I is

Example 1.5 Analysis of Mazurka in A♭ Major (op. 24/3), mm. 0|1–12.

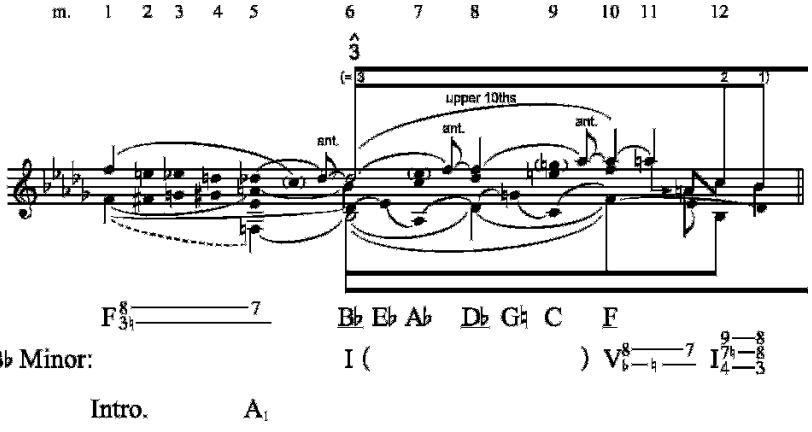


transformed into I➔ through the raising of its fifth to E♮ and the addition of G as seventh.) The continuation from IV to V seems more melodically focused in the tenor register (D♭>C>B♭) than in the soprano. In fact, the soprano D♭>C over the bar line between measures 7 and 8 makes the perception of a PAC at that point doubtful.[7] A modified traversal of the phrase's second half (extending what might have been a normative eight-measure phrase to twelve measures) brings the D♭-to-B♭ third into somewhat better focus (though note that D♭ appears within parentheses in **1.5** since it does not sound in the upper register in either traversal), with a more decisive landing on A♭ in measure 12. (Compare with **1.3**, measure 12.)

Opus 24/4

The extraordinary opening of the Mazurka in B♭ Minor involves the concurrent chromatic filling-in of two intervals from the F-A♮-C embellishing chord that precedes the initial tonic. Whereas the path from F to A♮ is traversed in the lower strand – five pitches in all – a chromatic descent from F to C in the upper strand encompasses six pitches, and so when A♮ arrives in measure 5 the upper strand has descended only as far as D♭, a half step shy of goal C. Chopin ingeniously employs this distinctive sonority (one that recurs often in his compositions) as a substitute for the intended one by treating downward-tending D♭ as an anticipation of the following tonic's third, *Kopfton* D♭. Consequently the descending fourth's goal C is elided, as conveyed by the parentheses around the C notehead in **1.6**. Similar elisions and anticipations recur during the tonic pillar's subsequent progression to V.

Example 1.6 Analysis of Mazurka in B♭ Minor (op. 24/4), mm. 0|1–12.



The mediant, a common element in minor-key progressions, here lives up to its name by serving as the mediator between the tonic and the dominant harmonies (measures 6 through 10). Segments of the descending circle of fifths, pursuing an upward trajectory, provide the locomotion. The soprano follows this upward course as well, maintaining the interval of a tenth with the bass at the tonic, mediant, and dominant nodal points. Such voice leading places the normative stepwise descent from the *Kopfton* in jeopardy. The arrow at measure 11 in **1.6** reveals Chopin's solution to the dilemma. Though A♮ (a transformation of diatonic A♭ into the leading tone) is introduced above the register of *Kopfton* D♭, eventually it is transferred downward an octave, and a C emerges above it to link the *Kopfton* D♭ of measure 6 and the PAC's B♭ of measure 12. (Though a C sounds at 11_3 in the accompaniment, its melodic statement is delayed until 12_1, at which point it takes on the role of a suspension.) Despite the bold path that connects the I and V♮ harmonies, first-species lines (here $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{B♭} > \text{C} > \text{B♭} \\ \text{D♭} > \text{A♮} > \text{B♭} \end{smallmatrix}$) over a bass arpeggiation (B♭–F–B♭), already noted in several other mazurkas, serve as the structural foundation.

Opus 30/2

Initially the Mazurka in F♯ Minor's opening sixteen measures might seem to represent the tonic pillar for a "Mazurka in B Minor."[8] Yet the absence of a PAC should raise eyebrows among astute listeners. Noting that these measures do not recur later in the mazurka (and thus do not conform to the behavior of a tonic pillar), that the mazurka concludes in F♯ Minor (despite the score's two-sharp key signature), and that the normative