

Harmony in Chopin

Chopin's oeuvre holds a secure place in the repertoire, beloved by audiences, performers, and aesthetes. In *Harmony in Chopin*, David Damschroder offers a new way to examine and understand Chopin's compositional style, integrating Schenkerian structural analyses with an innovative perspective on harmony and further developing ideas and methods put forward in his earlier books *Thinking About Harmony*, *Harmony in Schubert*, and *Harmony in Haydn and Mozart*. Reinvigorating and enhancing some of the central components of analytical practice, this study explores notions such as assertion, chordal evolution (surge), collision, dominant emulation, unfurling, and wobble through analyses of all forty-three mazurkas Chopin published during his lifetime. Damschroder also integrates analyses of eight major works by Chopin with detailed commentary on the contrasting perspectives of other prominent Chopin analysts. This provocative and richly detailed book will help transform readers' own analytical approaches.

DAVID DAMSCHRODER is Professor of Music Theory at the University of Minnesota. His current research focuses on harmony in tonal music, a project that began with a careful examination of historical analytical practices and was the basis for his book *Thinking About Harmony: Historical Perspectives on Analysis* (Cambridge, 2008). The project continues with focused studies on selected repertoires: *Harmony in Schubert* (Cambridge, 2010), *Harmony in Haydn and Mozart* (Cambridge, 2012), and the present book. He has written textbooks on music fundamentals and on ear-training and sight-singing and his articles and reviews have appeared in numerous journals. In addition, he is working on a textbook, *Tonal Analysis: A Schenkerian Perspective* (forthcoming). As a complement to his scholarly work, he occasionally performs on fortepiano and modern piano.

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Preface

Given my intention to explore harmony from Haydn through Debussy in depth, the decision to devote a volume to Chopin needs no special justification. Despite the narrow range of his compositional activities, Chopin's oeuvre holds a secure place in the nineteenth-century repertoire, both beloved by audiences and admired by aesthetes. So, having recently published *Harmony in Schubert* and *Harmony in Haydn and Mozart*, I take a respite from Vienna (where I assume Beethoven and Brahms will wait patiently), following Chopin westward to Paris. My decades-long fascination with his mazurkas here reaches its culmination in the presentation of probing yet concise analyses of all forty-three mazurkas that Chopin published during his lifetime. (While at work on this project I also performed these compositions in fortepiano recitals and taught them in a graduate seminar.) Readers are invited to join me in exploring these wonderful creations over the course of this volume's first three chapters. (As was the case in my seminar, a semester's study of Schenkerian analysis should be regarded as a prerequisite.) The remainder of my offering (chapters 4 through 10) continues a practice I pursued in *Schubert* and *Haydn/Mozart* (note my abbreviations for those volumes): a focus on masterpieces by Chopin that have been addressed in print or online by at least one other analyst, so that the reader may juxtapose my interpretations with alternative viewpoints and, with my guidance, explore the differences. Though I provide numerous detailed Schenkerian graphs (crucial for creating hierarchy-sensitive harmonic analyses), the Roman numerals and other symbols below the music notation will be the principal focus of my attention.

This study is intended for anyone who both especially enjoys listening to or performing Chopin's music and concurrently possesses an interest and facility in the analysis of tonal music. Though one might suppose that such attributes would describe all musicians, clearly some are more inclined towards nineteenth-century repertoire and to analytical undertakings than are others. As both teacher and author, I endeavor to offer analyses that are both insightful and vibrantly presented, hoping that any initial resistance might eventually melt. That said, the rigorous pursuit of analysis requires

dedication. This is not a book that can be digested quickly. Especially, chapters 1 through 3 should be read at a leisurely pace, ideally with time for repeated listening to each mazurka and (by those who are able) for making each work come alive at the keyboard.

Authors of studies in which harmony is a peripheral concern might reasonably elect to adopt the conventions for harmonic analysis that most readers already know and practice. My study of Chopin, on the other hand, is part of a broader harmony project that eventually will encompass the “long” nineteenth century: this is the fourth of a planned six volumes for the period up to 1850 (including *Thinking About Harmony: Historical Perspectives on Analysis* [abbreviated as *TAH*], the two analytical monographs mentioned above, and forthcoming studies on Beethoven and on Mendelssohn and Schumann), to be followed by another six volumes for developments after mid-century (*TAH II* plus monographs on Verdi, Brahms, Liszt and Wagner, Mahler, and Debussy). Consequently I have taken decisive steps to creatively transform the practice of scale-step (Roman numeral) harmonic analysis, integrating elements from historical harmony treatises, from Schenker’s writings, and from my own thoughts on such matters. Knowing that some readers will be encountering my perspective for the first time in this volume, in the initial chapters I offer especially detailed commentary that should assist in coming to terms with how my system differs from the current conventional practice. Readers already familiar with my analytical work are welcome to pursue the book’s chapters in any order.

Concurrent with the creation of *Harmony in Chopin* I have been developing the textbook *Tonal Analysis: A Schenkerian Perspective* (to be published by W. W. Norton). Its existence might impact *Chopin* readers in three ways: anyone whose understanding of basic Schenkerian principles is shaky will have another convenient resource for remedying the situation; I occasionally reference that work in my discussion of specific concepts or to call attention to a particular passage by Chopin that I analyze there; and because of this pedagogical preoccupation my Schenkerian graphs within *Chopin* have become more disciplined and consistent in their notational deployments.

At the heart of my perspective is the notion that imaginative thinking should play a vital role in analysis, since the notes in the score often do not fully convey a work’s structure. Consequently a major impediment to understanding will emerge if a rigid, literalist stance regarding what may come into play prevails when analyzing a composition. This dichotomy vividly struck me as I was viewing a painting depicting Christ

in the Garden of Gethsemane, recently attributed to Adriaen Isenbrant, at the art museum in Strasbourg. In a small area above a hedge or wall off to the left, one can make out some illumination. What could it be? Isenbrant has painted it at a slant, as if the source of the illumination were moving towards the right at a swift pace. Without adding something to what is literally presented in the painting, this passage must remain a mystery. For those who know the story, however, the illumination is central to the painting's meaning: it comes, of course, from torches (hidden behind the hedge) carried by men, led by Judas, intent upon arresting Christ. Likewise, elements of a musical story may be hinted at though not explicitly stated in a composition. There is much about how music works that will remain a mystery if one is unwilling or unable to imaginatively extend beyond the printed score when analyzing music. By gaining a clear understanding of a composer's practice when all requisite notes are present one becomes well equipped to make sense of more elusive passages.

My close engagement with selected contributions by numerous other analysts gives my harmony project a unique panoramic perspective regarding tonal analysis in the current era. These commentaries (set off by shading in chapters 4 through 10) should not be regarded as neutral reviews such as one might find in a journal, but instead as documentation regarding how other ways of analyzing music appear from my distinctive vantage point. Consequently readers may engage with my perspective through an inviting mix of opportunities to assess my own analyses and to encounter my reactions to various alternative viewpoints (and eventually, in other publications, the reactions of others to my viewpoints). Because so many perspectives will be assessed over the course of my project, I have established some ground rules. First, though some analysts have been very prolific, I will devote only one chapter to each within my set of books about music before 1850. (Where warranted a second turn may be granted during the post-1850 phase of the project.) Second, only analysts whose outcomes significantly contrast mine (even if we share similar methodologies) will be the focus of a chapter. Third, I must hold a neutral relationship with another analyst in order to write candidly about his or her work: friends, mentors, and former students consequently are excluded. As a result, some authors one might expect to find in a monograph on Chopin are not featured in individual chapters. For example, one of the leading Chopin authorities of our time has published admirable analyses of profound insight; and, I occasionally share quarters with him at music theory conferences.

Thus for reasons two and three, no chapter herein focuses on his work (though I do quote him on occasion in the endnotes to reinforce my points or to acknowledge alternative interpretations).

I appreciate the feedback on drafts of this work that I have received from various quarters. I also acknowledge the support of an Imagine Fund award from the University of Minnesota. As in the earlier volumes of my project, Peter Smucker has provided expert setting of the music examples. All analyses are based on the scores as printed in the recent National Edition (Cracow). In a few instances other editions and their editorial commentaries are drawn into the discussion. I am grateful to the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, for allowing me to purchase on microfilm and to make reference to the Oster Collection: Papers of Heinrich Schenker.

Conventions regarding note relations, chords, keys, and Roman numerals

Pitch simultaneities (such as C-E-G) are indicated using hyphens (-), while pitch successions (such as C-E-G) are indicated using dashes (-). Direction may be indicated in melodic succession: ascending as C<E<G, descending as G>E>C. A black arrow may be used to indicate a descending-fifth relationship that is or emulates a V⁽⁷⁾-I succession, whereas an outline arrow may be used to indicate a succession from a chord of the augmented-sixth type: for example, C→F-D→G→C; C-A_b-D⇒G→C.

Keys and chords are distinguished as follows: C Major (with a capital M) is the key of C Major; C major (with a small m) is a C major chord.

Unless another analyst's methodology is being discussed, Roman numerals are presented in capital letters regardless of a chord's quality, modified by one or more accidentals if the chord is altered. Thus C Major: I II V I and not I ii V I; and A Minor: I II V[#] I[#] (closing on a major tonic), not i ii^o V I. An accidental to the left of the numeral corresponds to the chord's root; one to the right corresponds to its third. If the chordal fifth, seventh, or ninth is altered, the analytical symbol will incorporate the corresponding Arabic numeral, as in C Minor: II^{5^b}. (Arrow notation – here II→ – offers an attractive, though less precise, alternative to the complete analytical symbol.) The bullet symbol (•) indicates an absent root. For example, B-D-F in C Major will be analyzed as V⁷ (or, with less precision, as V→).

Likewise a progression of chordal roots generally is presented in capital letters (C–D–G–C), though on occasions when quality is a factor in the discussion a capital letter may refer to major quality, a small letter to minor quality, and a small letter followed by a degree circle (°) to diminished quality: for example, C–a–F–d–b°–G–e–C.

A bracket is used to connect the analytical notation for two musical events that normally would follow one another but that in the context under discussion occur at the same moment: for example, C $\overline{F\sharp B}$ E when an F $\sharp$ –A $\sharp$ –C $\sharp$ chord sounds with, rather than before, root B in a descending circle of fifths.

Parentheses around a pitch in an analytical example indicate that it is not actually present in the score, though it is understood. Parentheses around analytical notation may refer to the expansion of a deeper-level harmony (for example, when I is expanded by I IV V I) or to the harmonic assertion of a voice-leading phenomenon (for example, when the 6 phase of a I^{5–6}, as in C–E–G to C–E–A, asserts the harmonic role of VI). Open parentheses designate a voice-leading transition between two harmonies. For example, I () IV indicates that the chords between I and IV (perhaps a circular, parallel, or sequential progression) do not themselves participate in the harmonic progression, but instead serve to connect the harmonies I and IV.

When a score’s chordal spellings do not coincide with the structurally appropriate spellings (for example, the substitution of easier-to-read F $\sharp$ –A–C $\sharp$ for cumbersome G $\flat$ –B $\flat$ –D $\flat$), I generally will use the structurally appropriate spellings in my examples and commentaries, often placing the enharmonic spellings within square brackets to assist readers in locating the pitches in question within the score.

I pay very close attention to hierarchies among pitches and chords. To alert readers to various hierarchical relationships I often will underline some pitch names to indicate their hierarchical prominence. For example, C<E D>B C above bass C–G–C conveys the relationship between two unfolded strands: a more prominent outer strand E>D>C, and a subordinate inner strand C>B<C.

Because diverse musical contexts are analyzed using graphs, it is difficult to pin down precise guidelines for how their notation should be crafted and read. Many styles of “Schenkerian” notation have appeared since the publication of Schenker’s *Free Composition* (hereafter abbreviated as *FC*), which itself does not present a single normative style. I regard the creation of a reductive graph as an art, endeavoring to use notation that is as clear and informative as possible. In general, open noteheads in my graphs

represent deeper structural or harmonic events than filled-in noteheads, while notes at the endpoints of beams or slurs are deeper than internal notes. Notes connected to a beam by a stem are more integral to the structure than those that are not. Especially in the early chapters I offer abundant commentary, which will give readers the opportunity to develop facility in interpreting my notation. Occasional annotations using abbreviations indicate functions of individual pitches or formal events, as follows:

- ant. anticipation
- CP chromatic passing note
- CV chromatic variant
- HC half cadence
- IAC imperfect authentic cadence
- IN incomplete neighboring note
- N neighboring note
- P passing note
- PAC perfect authentic cadence
- prg. progression
- susp. suspension
- W wobble

Of course, the graphs often will incorporate Roman-numeral harmonic analyses, and in this regard I sometimes depart from Schenker’s practice. Because it is innovative, I document my Roman-numeral usage very carefully as the chapters unfold.

Because measure numbers are a pervasive feature in my close analyses, I have developed an abbreviated style of reference, in the form $\text{measure}_{\text{beat}}$. For example, the symbol 2_3 indicates the third beat of measure 2. Generally the word “measure” will not precede the number. I regard measures in $\frac{2}{2}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ as containing two beats. A measure designation such as 14/16 means that a given chord is prolonged from measure 14 through measure 16, with contrasting content occurring between statements of the chord, whereas the designation 14–16 indicates a continuous prolongation of a single chord without significant internal contrast. The symbol 15|16 indicates measure 16 along with its upbeat.