

Themata of the dissertation titled

The process of the dissolution in functional tonality

by Keresztes Nóra

This paper is an attempt to map the harmonic and tonal changes that took place during the 19th century and the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries by (mainly harmonically) analysing Baroque, Viennese Classical, Romantic and 20th-century pieces.

With regard to the wide use of the term 'tonality', the essay first summarizes the definitions and the basic theories of the notion of tonality. It presents the origins of the term and the different approaches, discusses the notion of harmonic and melodic tonality, and establishes the term's use of this paper, which is in every case the abbreviation of the long expression 'functional, major-minor tonality'. (Chapter 1 *The notion of tonality*)

Chapter 2 demonstrates some *Early examples expanding the functional tonality* from Biber's *Battalia* (1673) through pieces of Rameau, J. S. Bach, Haydn and Mozart till the 3rd movement of Beethoven's Stringquartet in A minor op. 132 (1825). It is apparent that, while in Bach's oeuvre the dense chromaticism inherited from Frescobaldi (through his South-German pupils) is not rare, in the overwhelming multitude of the Viennese Classical pieces the tonally instabil sections are whether introductions or representing any other situations which emerge from their environment by being dramatically accentuated (for ex. developing sections); i. e. the 'atonal' sections adjust themselves to a firm tonality, so the especiality of the examples always origins in their functions. The other possibility is that the composers renounce traditional tonality in order to represent a kind of (humorous, tragical or descriptive) non-musical program. All the examples are occasional, non of them is the result of an organic process, non of them has any antecedents or consequents neither in the oeuvre of the composer, nor between the products of the wider environment, i. e. the stylistic era.

The paper then traces out the fundamental social and cultural background of the process taking place in music (in the Appendix), and skeletonizes the process itself (in Chapter 3, *The process itself*), which seems to come along in two different lines, one of them being an internal destructive factor, denominated „hyperchromatic“ (German) way; the other an external, imported subversive power, called „modal“ (French) way.

Running the detailed discourse this thesis nevertheless does not divide the process in this way, but examines the changes as a unity, arranging the phenomena in the following logical chain: what kind of changes did take place from the second quarter of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century in the harmonic stock (Chapter 4), in chord- and key-relations (Chapter 5) and finally in the realm of tonality itself (Chapter 6).

Chapter 4 (*The changings in the tone-set and in the harmonic stock*) discusses the expansion of the fifth-system, the further development of the Viennese Classical altered chord-groups:

the Subdominant domain (new minor subdominants [chords borrowed from the parallel minor], variants of the Neapolitan chord, and of the augmented sixth chords), the Dominant sphere (variants of the Dominant seventh and ninth, new use of secondary dominants and diminished sevenths), the Tonic domain (variants of the VI, Tonic with sixte ajoutée, and with consonant seventh), other non function-specific altered chords, individual altered chords, enharmonically notated chords, the expansion of the third-system, and finally exits from the third-system (chromatically doubling third-constructed chords, fourth-system and changing-chords as petrified dissonances).

The next chapter (Chapter 5 *New chord- and key-relations*) goes to a 'higher level', here the dissertation examines the new types of chord- and key-relations: characteristically Romantic progressions (plagal and pseudo-plagal patterns /=the variants of the VII⁴₃-I cadence/); chord progressions and key relations with the overstraining of the functional relations (oscillation of parallel minor and major, the Neapolitan-related keys, diatonic third-pendulums, the functional cases of the chord substitution, third-relations, polar relations); and chord progressions and key relations with the suspension of the functional relations (non-functional cases of the chord substitution, third-relations, polar relations, relation with the common third, relation of major second-distance keys, and finally mixtures).

The last section (Chapter 6 *Changings concerning the whole tonality*) deals with the changings of the key itself. First it represents the two directions (overheating: „hyperchromaticism“, as an internal destructive power, and refrigerating: neomodality and tone-sets different from diatony as an external destructive factor); then analyses the changings (new types of modulation, the dissolution of the tonality: quick changing of tonality /extended tonality/, floating tonality, atonality, bitonality, polytonality); finally mentions the new reference points appearing when traditional tonality collapses (distance principle-axis tonality, twelve-tone composition).

In the summary the essay arrives at the conclusion that it is possible to get to the disintegrating of the tonality in more ways: theoretically either the structures created by hyperchromaticism, or the use of the new tone-sets (pentatony, church modes, modes of heptatonia secunda and tertia) could be enough to weaken and finally destroy the functional, major-minor tonality of the Viennese Classicism. In classifying the phenomena the theoretic dissection is made more difficult first by the fact that most of the subphenomena can be originated in several roots. On the other hand the practical examinations show that within a piece of music the theoretically well-separable external and internal factors appear mixed, intergenerating or at least amplifying each other; thus when analysing pieces, in the most

cases it is impossible to examine the subphenomena in themselves. Arranging the subphenomena of the process discussed in this essay in a logical chain and listing examples of different origin of each one, it is unquestionable that the term 'evolution' can be used to describe the process. For if it is sure that some phenomena came into existence in different places and can be arranged into a logical chain, it is apparent that one originates in the other. However this fact does not mean that the later is more advanced than the former. Taking everything into account, the almost one-century course which the paper attempts to sketch can be considered evolutionary in the sense of 'logically built up of chainlink-related phenomena', and not in the sense of 'developing', for, just as in the biological evolution, the progress is not developing, but only changing.