

Chapter 1

III. Postulates of the Theory

This study presents a new theory of art music that is a considerable departure from what is generally taught to our students and from what exists in prior treatises. A music theory predicated on an obligatory interaction of the diatonic and the chromatic is incompatible with preexisting theories that interpret the diatonic as a foundation upon which the chromatic may or may not develop. The present theory can be reduced to a corpus of five essential postulates to delineate its most basic components. Each of these postulates will be subjected to detailed discussion in subsequent chapters.

1. Any tonal or modal composition past the middle of the sixteenth century will seek to unfold both a chromatic and a diatonic octave from the final or tonic of the mode or key over the course of the composition. Specifically, the tendency of the chromatic is to ascend by half step until the octave is completed at *ti-do*, while the tendency of the diatonic is to descend by scale degree until the octave is completed at *re-do*. The two lines are thus controlled by a contrapuntal progression that ultimately achieves octave completion via the major sixth moving to the octave. We call the octave ascent of the chromatic genus to the final or tonic the *Primary Chromatic Array* (PCA), and the descent of the diatonic genus the *Primary Diatonic Array* (PDA). Lesser chromatic orderings that do not seek tonic octave completion occupy a lower level of structure and are called *Secondary Chromatic Arrays* (SCA).

2. Modes and keys are ultimately derived from larger gamut systems and therefore comprise more than just the seven notes of their respective diatonic octave species. In order for any composition, whether modal or tonal, to prolong its final or tonic through harmonic cadences occupying the middleground, chromatic alterations of diatonic degrees are mandatory. Thus any given mode or key will comprise both diatonic and chromatic pitch-classes drawn from the larger gamut systems to which they pertain. However, no mode or tonality (“key”) may have more than eleven diatonic and chromatic pitch classes. The twelfth or “missing pitch” of any mode or tonality is that which is not included in the respective gamut system of that mode or tonality. If the twelfth pitch class is included, this would signify a modulation of the gamut or system either up or down depending on how the pitch class is spelled and whether we are dealing with a mode or a key. The missing pitch, thus, is also a “system-shift motivator”; that is, an individual pitch class that may provoke a modulation from one eleven pitch-class system to another. Either way, the missing pitch or system-shift motivator is invariably the minor third or augmented second above either the central hexachord of the modal gamut (usually *naturalis* or *mollis*) or of the tonic system of a key (if the tonic system is minor, then the missing pitch is derived from the system of the relative major).
3. In common practice tonality, any given eleven pitch-class system is defined by its “consonant tritone;” meaning the tritone that is based on the tonic pitch class of the key and its octave divider (always spelled as a sharp). Again, minor mode will use the octave divider of its relative major. The missing pitch of any given system will automatically form its own “dissonant tritone,” based on its own tonic pitch and its own octave divider.

The dissonant tritone forms a symmetrical complement to the consonant tritone of the system since one divides the other exactly at the halfway point. Both tritone complements therefore form a “systems matrix” of minor thirds/augmented seconds. Any composition that contains all twelve pitch-classes will inevitably imply a modulation or shift from one tritone eleven pitch-class area to another. However, no composition that maintains a background key can modulate outside of its systems matrix; all modulations of systems relate to the tonic consonant tritone and its complement.

4. Since every mode or key is ultimately derived from a larger gamut system of overlapping hexachords, each gamut system or tonality is harmonically governed by its central hexachord reordered in fifths. Any minor mode key will depend on the hexachord of its relative major since no minor mode hexachord exists. Thus C major can be expressed as a reordered hexachord, F – C – G – d – a – e, in which all the strong chords (or harmonic areas) appear at the beginning of the hexachord and all the weaker chords (or harmonic areas) appear at the end of it. A minor, the relative minor of C, follows the same hexachord except that the ordering of keys would be reversed (A minor appears at the end of the hexachord and its relative appears at the beginning).
5. Each of the above postulates may be understood ultimately under the control of a background that is organized by the strictest rules of counterpoint. Any valid analytical system must approach a composition within the framework of its basic contrapuntal structure. Both the PCA and the PDA may be viewed respectively as 1) the pairing of soprano and tenor voices of a fundamental two-part texture, and 2) a species contrapuntal

reduction of the essential structure of any given composition. The length and complexity of the composition determine the ways in which its fundamental structure is fleshed out, creating a unique entity. Most compositions would display at least a subsidiary-level voice part between the soprano and tenor and, more often than not, another subsidiary-level voice part in the bass. Therefore, the developmental process, with all its diatonic and chromatic adjuncts in the form of its various arrays, is bound by the laws of counterpoint.

By returning the chromatic to its rightful role with the diatonic as co-progenitor of the compositional process, we believe that music theory will have another, and perhaps, more successful methodology with which to interpret composition, chromaticism, and the developmental process. Subsequent chapters will flesh out the postulates of the theory and apply them to works from the literature.