Chapter 29, Additional Materials

FURTHER ANALYSIS

A Fragment by William Grant Still

The passage from William Grant Still's opera *Minette Fontaine* reproduced in example 29.26a illustrates several of the harmonic idioms we have studied in this and previous chapters. The following comments will help you through the analysis of this music. They will also show you the difficulties of interpreting music using this type of advanced harmonic idioms and the various possible interpretations you might come up with.

1. The example is in B♭M. In what form is the tonic chord presented in m. 139?

2. The dominant chord in m. 139, beat 4, is doubly interesting. What kind of triad is it based on (consider the fifth!)? Otherwise, this is also an eleventh chord, but the eleventh is raised (B♮). A chord with a raised eleventh is called an augmented eleventh chord (V^{+11}). In our example, because both the fifth and the eleventh are augmented, the label would be V_{+}^{+11}. From a linear point of view, notice the two half-step neighbor motions in the inner voices, two "sighs" depicting the mourning character of the song.

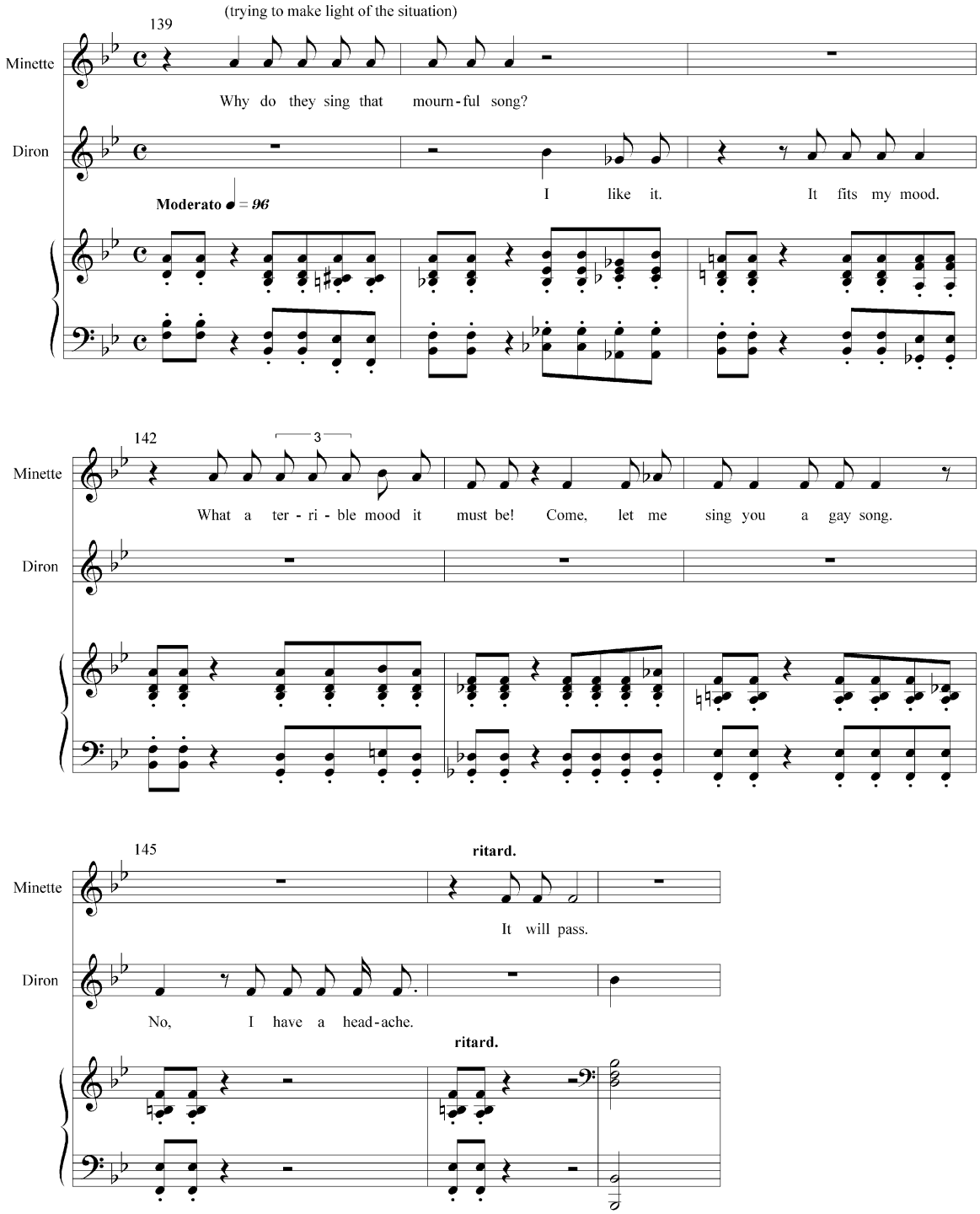
3. The harmonies in m. 140, beats 3–4 are not easily explained from a functional point of view. In B♭M, they would be ♭II7 (the Neapolitan) and an unusual ♭vii$\frac{9}{7}$. One could also hear them as a brief detour into a key area of G♭M (♭VI), and then you would hear them as IV_7-ii$\frac{9}{7}$, two predominant chords that, however, do not continue into the expected dominant-tonic harmonies in G♭M. You can also hear them linearly as chromatic neighbor chords embellishing the B♭M tonic.

4. The chord in m. 141, beat 4, can also be heard as a linear embellishment of the tonic chord. If we try to organize this sonority by thirds, we will also see that it can be read as F–A–(C)–E♭–G♭ chord, that is, a V♭$\frac{9}{7}$, although with the ninth in the bass, that is, a fourth-inversion ninth chord! Inversions of extended tertian chords are unusual, and fourth inversions of ninths chords are even more unusual. But if we want to hear this chord "vertically," that is the best interpretation. In a linear interpretation of this chord, of course, we would hear it as a common-tone embellishment of the B♭ tonic, in which the top voice is retained and the other voices move by step (neighbor note [NN]) or by third. In any case, this highly dissonant and somber-sounding chord perhaps tells us something about Diron's mood, as Minette notices in the next line!

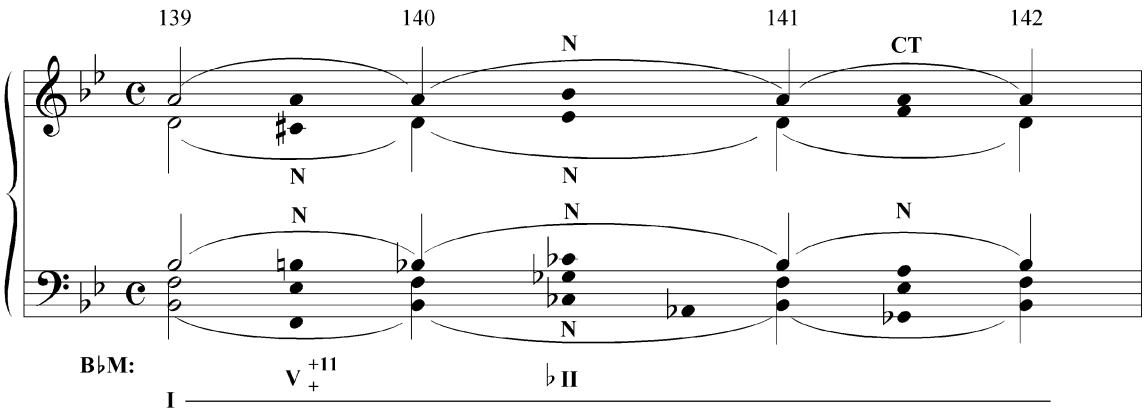
5. Example 29.26b demonstrates the linear interpretation of the chords in mm. 139–142 as a prolongation of I. Read and understand the linear relationships expressed in this graph.

6. Analyze the rest of the excerpt on your own. The chords in mm. 142–143 can be interpreted as nondominant extended tertian sonorities (on which degrees?), and the chords in mm. 144–146 as dominant extended tertian chords. Identify their exact types.

Example 29.26a William Grant Still, *Minette Fontaine*, mm. 139-147



Example 29.26b Reduction, mm. 139-142



CHROMATIC VOICE LEADING BY CONTRARY MOTION: THE OMNIBUS

Look again at example 29.15a, mm. 85–88. You will see a sequence in which the upper voice descends chromatically, while the lower voice ascends chromatically in one-measure-long segments. If you take each of these segments in isolation, you will observe that the basic contrapuntal principle here is chromatic voice leading by contrary motion. In example 29.27a we see a reduction of these measures. Needless to say, this passage is not ruled by the principles of functional harmony. If you look at the sequential segments from the point of view of vertical sonorities, you will notice that they are made up of a Mm_7 sonority and a °7th sonority (whose roots are a whole step apart) connected chromatically by a passing $\frac{6}{5}$ sonority. The fourth sonority in each case is a triad on which the °7th resolves. Play the example, and understand how this is basically a chromatic contrary-motion passage in which the resulting sonorities function as described above.

The Chopin progression is actually a slight variation of a standard chromatic progression known as the **omnibus**. This interesting linear pattern is reproduced in example 29.27b. In the Chopin example, the omnibus harmonizes a descending chromatic line in the soprano. Here it takes the form of an ascending chromatic line in the bass, and instead of a passing chord connecting a Mm_7 and a °7th as in Chopin, in example 29.27b we have a passing $\frac{6}{4}$ connecting a °7th and a Mm_7. That is, the order of the seventh chords has been reversed because here the chromatic scale ascends instead of descending. For a descending chromatic line in the bass, just read example 29.27b backward. Notice the chromatic voice exchanges marked in each of the sequence segments. Observe also that the omnibus in example 29.27b is simply a chromatic linear prolongation of an FM V_7 chord.

Examples 29.27b and c