

Chapter 31, Additional Materials

AN EXAMPLE BY RICHARD STRAUSS

Example 31.21 shows a harmonic reduction of mm. 1–20 from Richard Strauss’s 1894 song, “Ruhe, meine Seele!” (anthology, no. 58). Play through the reduction (or through this passage in the song), and try to hear tonal references (to a key or to key areas). You will discover that there are not any clear ones. The first two chords are built on an E pedal, and the voice leading is by half steps in all voices. Although the end of the song (and the key signature) indicates a CM key, these opening chords hardly function in CM: If you consider the roots, you come up with a Mm_7 chord on C, followed by a mm_7 chord on F# (roots a tritone apart). Considered as a whole, mm. 1–6 can be heard as chords built on a linear bass (E–D–C#) and in which all other voice leading is by half step or common tone.

In mm. 6–13 we have a succession of Mm_7 chords built on an ascending-fourth bass pattern (that is, the circle-of-fifths fragment C#–F#–B) which, again, is hardly related to a possible CM key area. Finally, in mm. 14–20 the descending linear bass returns, but now it leads all the way to C (E–D–C#–C). This is the first appearance of the “tonic” pitch, C, in the bass. Over it, however, we find the most ambiguous of all sonorities, a vii°_7 chord. You can see that eventually, at the end of the song, the same harmonic phrase (mm. 31–34) ends up leading to the functional progression in CM that closes the song. But what signs have you seen or heard of the CM tonality, or any other tonal center for that matter, in mm. 1–20?

Example 31.21 Richard Strauss, “Ruhe, meine Seele,” mm. 1–20 (Harmonic Reduction)

The image shows a harmonic reduction of the first 20 measures of Richard Strauss's song "Ruhe, meine Seele!". The score is written for piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The bass staff features a prominent linear bass line with notes E, D, C#, and C, which are connected by a long slur. Above this bass line, various chords are indicated with their constituent notes and accidentals. Measure numbers 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 14, 16, 18, and 20 are marked above the treble staff. The reduction illustrates the complex harmonic structure of the opening, highlighting the use of Mm7 and mm7 chords and the overall voice leading.