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3/15/2021

Dispelling Chandler Carter's Argument: Tonality Promotes Illusion & Chromaticism/Dissonance Dispels it in Stravinsky's, *The Rake's Progress*

Carter argues that tonality promotes illusion, while chromaticism and dissonance dispels it. Carter's argument fails to include Nick Shadow's initial entrance in Act I, and the farewell between Tom and Anne before Tom leaves with Nick to head off to London. In these two respective sections, Stravinsky uses the absence of tonality to promote illusion, and tonality as a form of stability and reality. We will examine how Stravinsky uses his harmonies and tonality in the opposite manner that Carter suggests.

Starting at rehearsal number 47, Nick makes his first appearance. As we know, Nick is the Devil, and soon will begin his pursuit of ensnaring Tom. Using Carter's argument that tonality promotes illusion, it would make sense that Nick, whose primary objective is to fool Tom, would sing without the use of much chromaticism. Figure 1 shows that Nick sings almost exclusively using chord tones between rehearsal numbers 47 and 50. Despite the fact that there is little to no dissonance sung by Nick in this passage, it would be hard to argue there is a tonal center. Throughout this passage Nick fluctuates rapidly between different chords. Each of his entrances are all on a different chord, making it very hard to establish any form of tonality.¹

Nick is the personification of the Devil. Rather than stating his objectives outright, achieving his goals requires the use of cunning and misdirection. This misdirection comes from the change of chords during his introduction to Tom. Much like how a magician uses sleight of hand to deceive their audience, Nick begins to fool Tom by leading him through a series of chords that fail to achieve any sense of

¹ There is a different chord used for each measure with the exception of the fourth measure of rehearsal number 48 and the third measure of rehearsal number 49. Both of these measures utilize an F# 6/5 chord.

tonality. This misdirection allows Nick to then begin his pursuit of luring Tom into the illusion that a recently deceased uncle has left him a small fortune.

After Nick has successfully convinced Tom to accompany him back to London, Anne and Tom say farewell to one another. This musical section begins at rehearsal number 83 with Anne first saying “farewell.” From rehearsal number 83 through to rehearsal number 85, Anne sings with the orchestra, exclusively in G major. Figure 2 shows that Anne uses zero chromaticism in her farewell to Tom. She also starts out by singing sol-mi twice in her first two measures, and three measures before rehearsal number 85 she sings an ascending gesture of fa-sol-la-ti-do before passing the line to Tom for him to begin his farewell.

Anne has not been explicitly tricked by Nick. Nick’s deception has only reached as far as convincing Tom to leave Anne for London. Therefore, in this section, Anne’s farewell as she sings the line “Farewell for now, my heart is with you, with you when you go, however you may fare,” in G major, her sentiment is completely genuine and without any hint of the promotion of illusion. The chromaticism during this song begins at rehearsal number 85, when Tom begins his farewell to Anne. Figure 3 shows that in the second measure of rehearsal number 85, we see Tom begin to navigate away from G major through the use of E-flat, and a G-flat that resolves downward to F-natural (rather than resolving up to G) two measures before rehearsal number 86. This movement away from G-major represents the beginning of his journey away from Anne, both physically and emotionally. And given that he has been tricked by Nick already, this chromaticism could also work as a representation of his weakening understanding between reality and illusion.

While Carter’s argument makes sense in the passages he outlined in his article, the suggestion that tonality promotes illusion is not supported during the opening scenes of Act I. Nick’s superobjective is to trick Tom so that he can claim his soul. Instead of achieving this goal through tonality, his initial entrance rapidly navigates through non-tonal chords, thus creating his first form of tricking Tom. Later in

the scene, when Tom and Anne say farewell, tonality is used as a form of structure and reality. Anne sings in G Major, symbolizing her genuine feelings toward Tom as he leaves. Shortly after, Tom navigates away from G major to symbolize his distancing from Anne and reality. While tonality can be argued to be a source of promoting illusion, the argument does not make sense during these sections.

Энн
Anne

83

Про - щай, про - щай, про -
Fare - well, fare - well, fare

dolce

pp *p*

G^Δ

3. 4.

84

- щай, мой друг! Серд - цем бу - ду с то - бой я,
- well for now, my heart, my heart Is with you,

36

3. 4.

85

бу - ду я с то - бой где б ни был ты, мой друг.
with you when you go, Now - e - ver you may fare.

Том
Tom

Где б толь - ко ни был
Wher - e - ver, when a -

Figure 2 – Anne’s “Farewell” to Tom in G Major.

85

Э.
А.
бу - ду я с то - бой где б ни был ты, мой друг.
with you when you go, How - e - ver you may fare.

Том
Том

Где б толь - ко ни был
When - e - ver, when a -

86

Т.
Т.
я, я зна - ю, что все - гда, все - гда со мно - ю ты.
-part, I may be, I shall know That you are with me there.

Figure 3 – Tom's "Farewell" to Anne, straying from G Major.