The Fourier Transform and a Theory of Harmony for the Twentieth Century

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A copy of this talk is available at people.bu.edu/jyust/

Outline

I. Forte's Project and the DFT

- 1. A theory of harmony for the 20th century
- 2. Pc-vectors
- 3. DFT components and interval content
- 4. Phase spaces

II. Debussy: "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir"

- 1. Heptatonic scales and diatonicity
- 2. Common tones and harmonic qualities

III. Stravinsky and the Octatonic

- 1. Rite of Spring, Introduction and Augurs
- 2. Octatonic scale versus octatonic quality

IV. Feldman, Palais de Mari



I. Forte's Project and the DFT

- 1. A theory of harmony for the 20th century
 - 2. Pc-vectors
 - 3. DFT components and interval content
 - 4. Phase spaces

A Theory of Harmony for the 20th Century

Forte's project:

"It is the intention of the present work to provide a general theoretical framework, with reference to which the processes underlying atonal music may be systematically described."

The Structure of Atonal Music (1973), Preface



A Theory of Harmony for the 20th Century

Forte's project:

General features of harmony that are largely independent of compositional aesthetic:

• Interval content determines harmonic quality

Interval content ↔ DFT components

Common pc content determines harmonic proximity

Subset relations ↔ DFT phase spaces



Discrete Fourier Transform on Pcsets

Lewin, David (1959). "Re: Intervallic Relations between Two Collections of Notes," *JMT* 3/2.

——— (2001). "Special Cases of the Interval Function between Pitch Class Sets X and Y." *JMT* 45/1.

Quinn, Ian (2006–2007). "General Equal-Tempered Harmony," *Perspectives of New Music* 44/2–45/1.

Amiot, Emmanuel (2013). "The Torii of Phases."

Proceedings of the International Conference for
Mathematics and Computation in Music,
Montreal, 2013 (Springer).

Yust, Jason (2015). "Schubert's Harmonic Language and Fourier Phase Spaces." *JMT* 59/1.



Characteristic Function of a Pcset

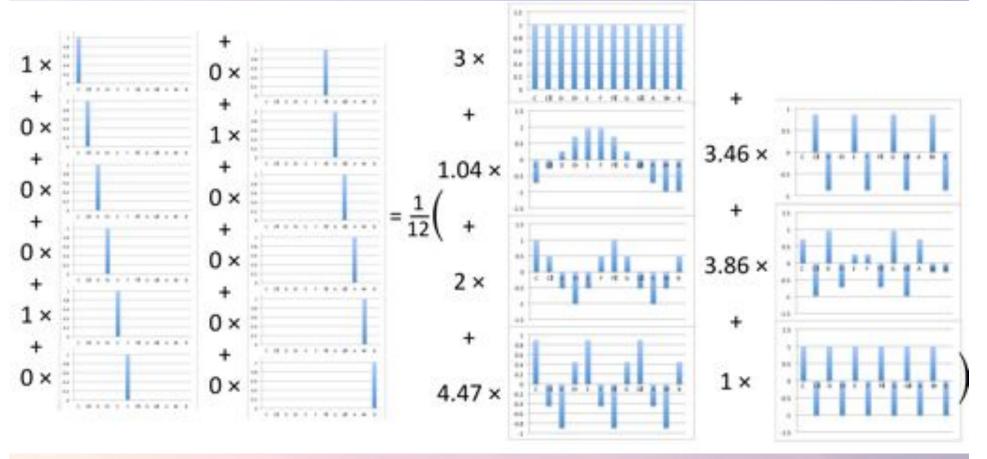


The characteristic function of a poset is a 12-place vector with 1s for each pc and 0s elsewhere:

(1, 0, 0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0)

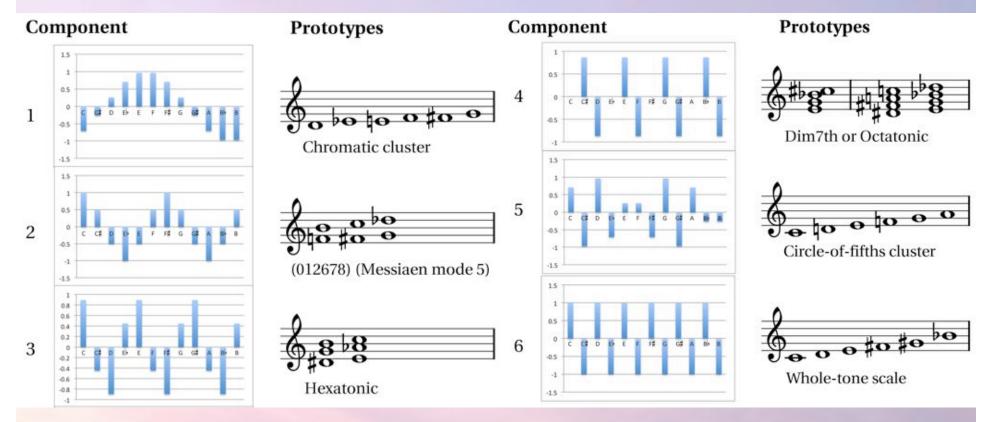
C C# D E F F F# G G# A B B

DFT Components



The DFT is a **change of basis** from a sum of pc spikes to a sum of discretized periodic (perfectly even) curves.

DFT Components



Quinn's *generic prototypes* are posets that maximize a given component. Subsets and supersets of the prototypes are the best representatives of each component

DFT Components

Notation

 f_n The *n*th DFT component

 $|f_n|$ The magnitude of the nth component

 $|f_n|^2$ Squared magnitude

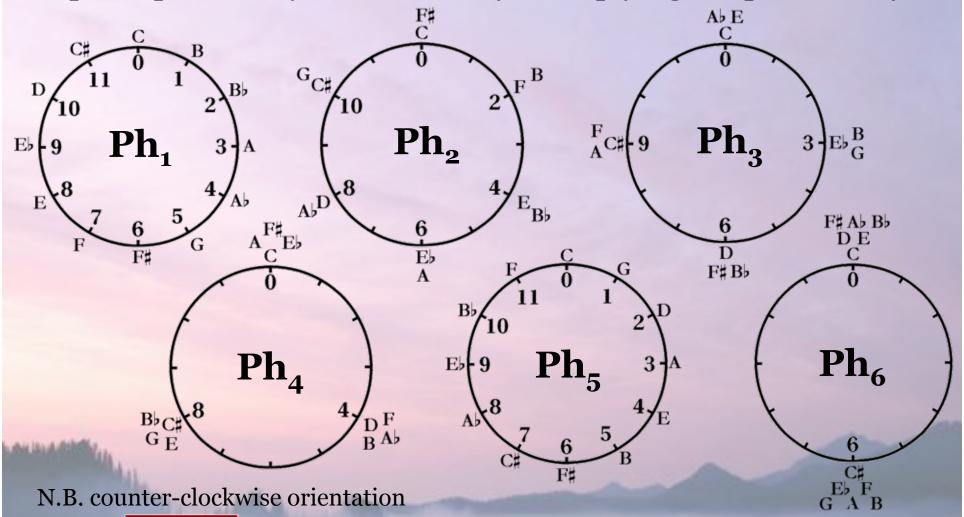
 φ_n The phase $(0 \le \varphi_n \le 2\pi)$ of the *n*th component

Ph_n Phase normalized to pc-values: $(0 \le Ph_n \le 12)$

 $\langle \langle (|f_1|^2, Ph_1), (|f_2|^2, Ph_2), (|f_3|^2, Ph_3), (|f_4|^2, Ph_4), (|f_5|^2, Ph_5), (|f_6|^2, Ph_6) \rangle \rangle$



One-dimensional phase spaces are Quinn's *Fourier balances*, superimposed n-cycles created by multiplying the pc-circle by n.

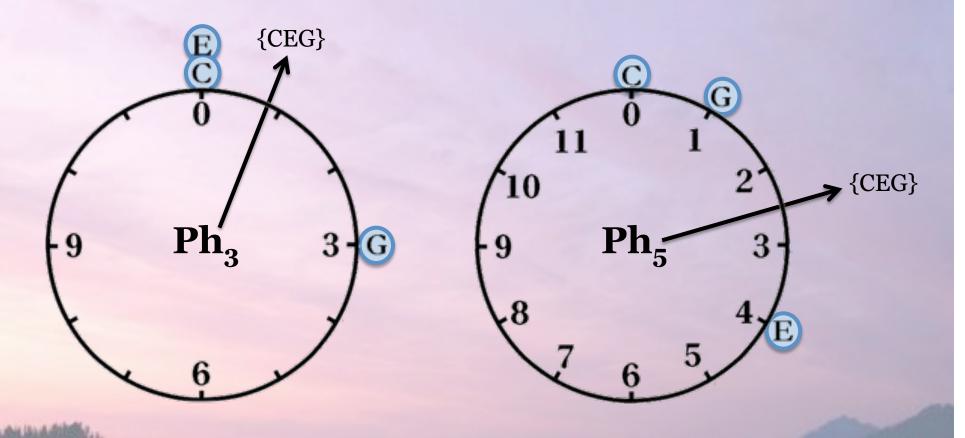


DFT and a Theory of Harmony for the 20th Century

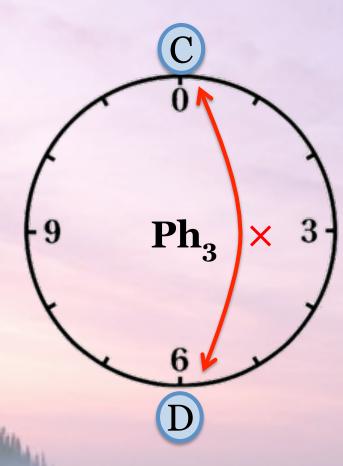
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The position of the poset in the phase space is the circular average of the individual pcs



Opposite phases cancel one another out. Therefore posets can have undefined phases.



{CD} has undefined Ph₃, $|f_3| = 0$

This is a kind of **Generalized Complementation:** Complements balance one another in all phase spaces.

An analytical proto-methodology:

Each Fourier component measures an independent musical quality: (1) chromaticism, (2) quartal harmony, (3) triadic harmony, (4) octatonicism, (5) diatonicism, (6) whole-tone balance.

Distances in phase spaces indicate:

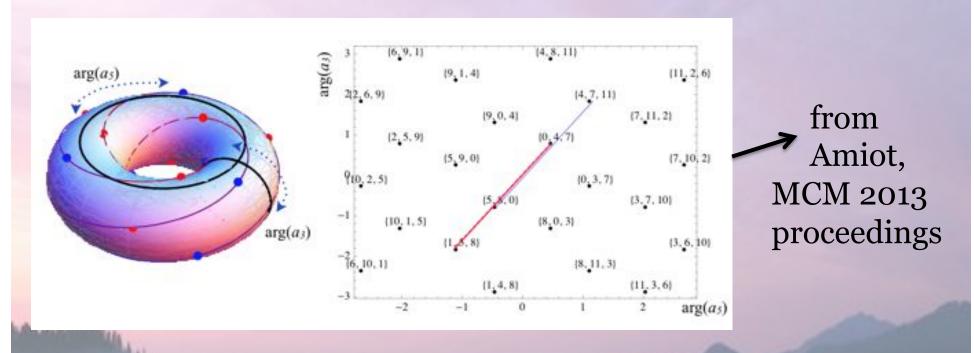
- Relatedness of harmonies on the given dimension
- Whether the harmonies **reinforce** one another or weaken one another on the given dimension when combined.



Phase Spaces: Two dimensional

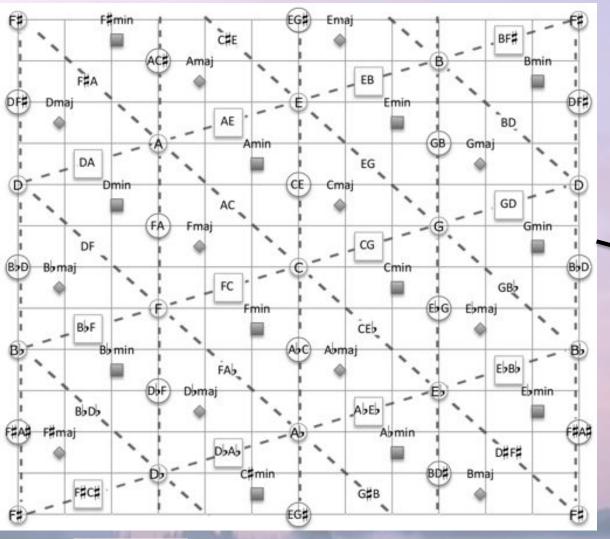
A two-dimensional phase space tracks the phases of two components, and is topologically a torus.

Amiot (2013) and Yust (2015) use Ph₃₋₅-space to describe tonal harmony.



Phase Spaces: Two dimensional

Amiot (2013) and Yust (2015) use Ph_{3,5}-space to describe



tonal harmony

Pcs, consonant dyads and triads, and *Tonnetz* in Ph_{3,5}-space, from Yust (2015) (*JMT* 59/1)



- 1. Heptatonic scales and diatonicity
- 2. Common tones and harmonic qualities

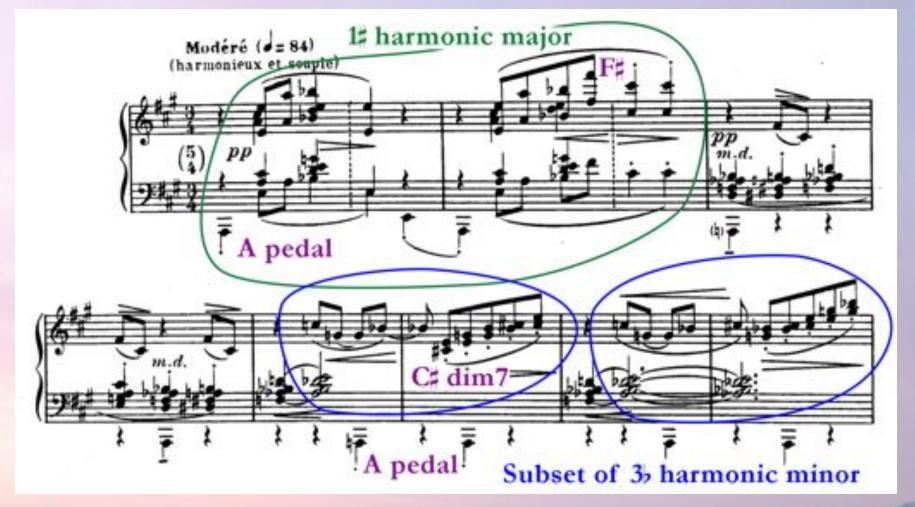
Scale Theory, Subsets, and Phase Space

Problems in the analytical application of scale theory:

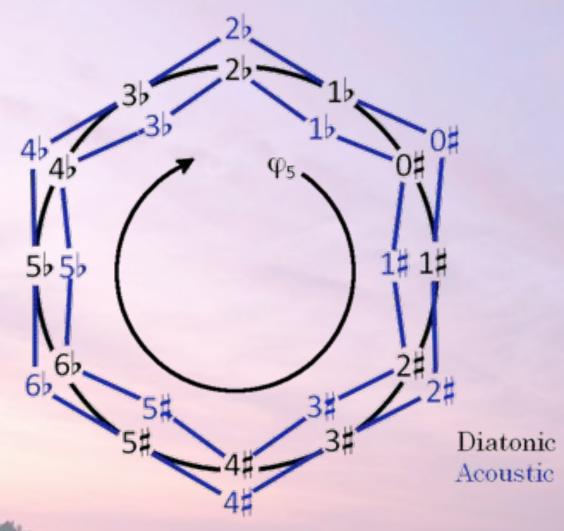
- (1) The status of **subsets** of multiple scales and supersets of multiple scales.
- (2) The range of variability in what counts as a scalar set.

A possible solution: Phase space 5

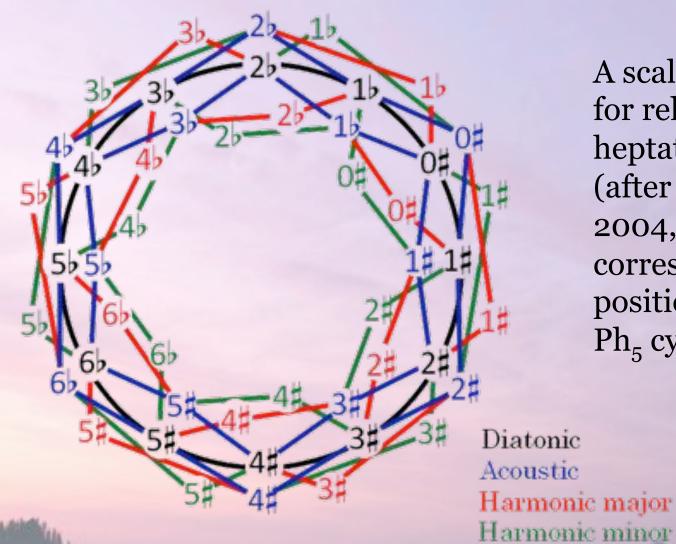




Debussy, Preludes I, no. 4, "Les sons et les parfums tournent en l'air de soir"

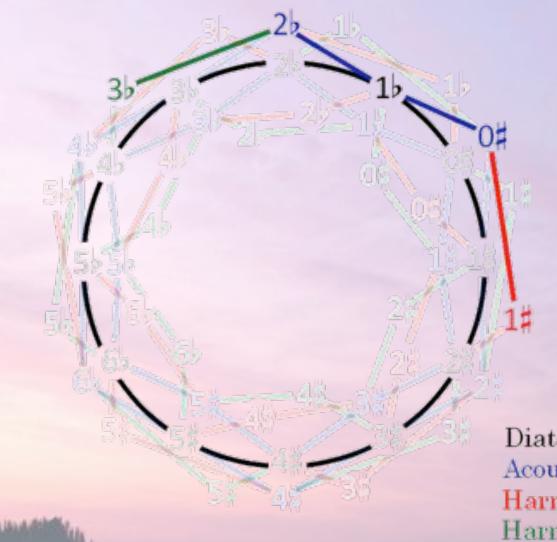


A scalar network for relatively even heptatonic scales (after Tymoczko 2004, 2011) corresponds to positions on a Ph₅ cycle.



A scalar network for relatively even heptatonic scales (after Tymoczko 2004, 2011) corresponds to positions on a Ph₅ cycle.





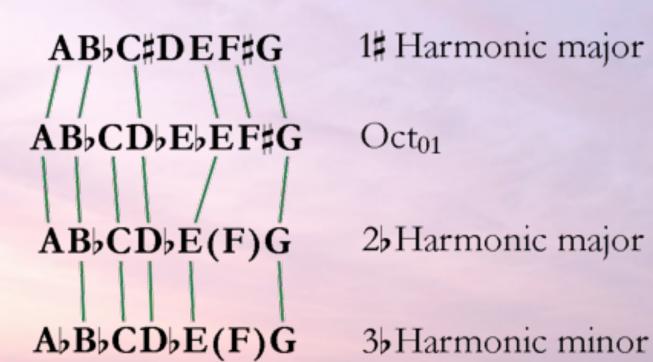
The scales in the opening of the Prelude require four moves in the scale network

Diatonic
Acoustic
Harmonic major
Harmonic minor



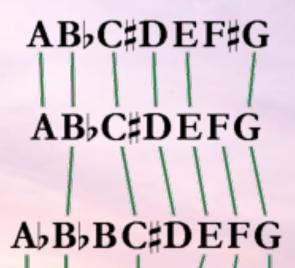
But . . .

These scales can also be connected with just three moves By using Oct₀₁





Or . . . By using Oct₁₂



1# Harmonic major

0# Harmonic minor

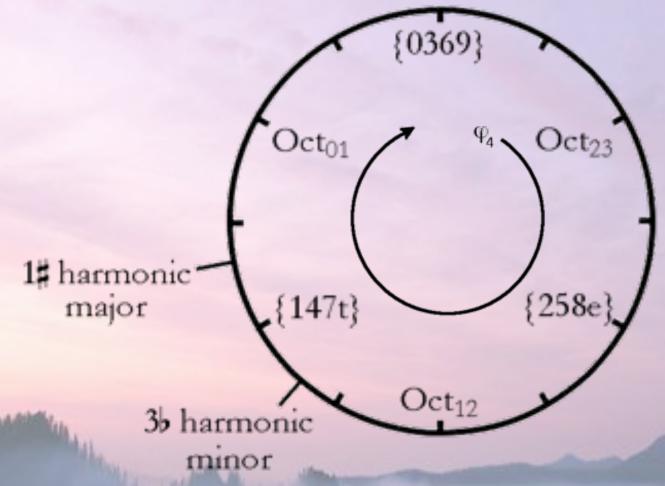
 Oct_{12}

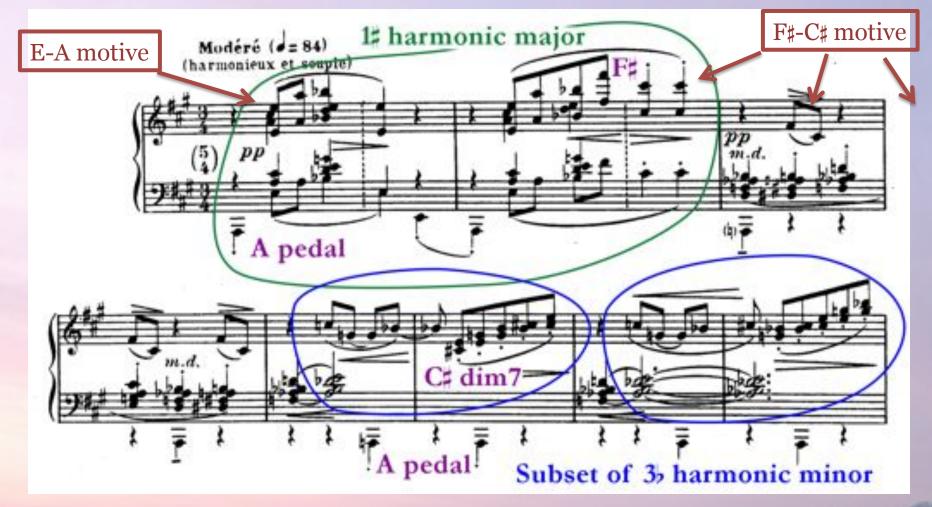
AbBbCDbE(F)G

3 Harmonic minor

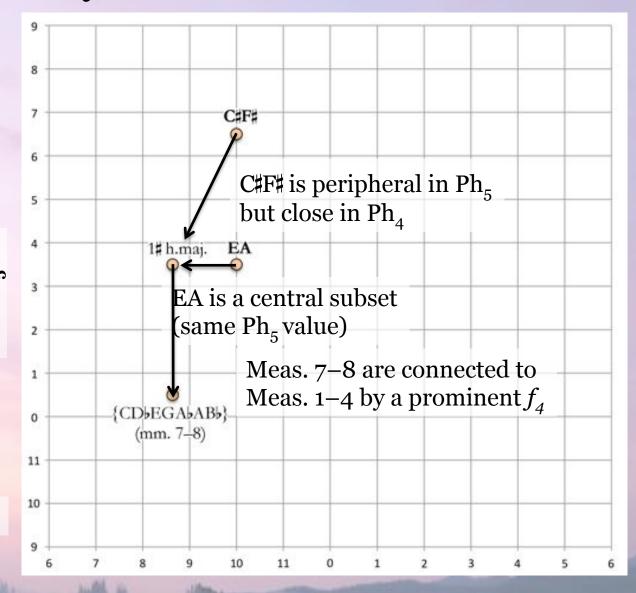


Why? Although far apart in Ph_5 They are close together in Ph_4





Debussy, Preludes I, no. 4, "Les sons et les parfums tournent en l'air de soir"



 $\leftarrow Ph_4 \rightarrow$



Debussy Airs: Change of Quality



Debussy Airs: Change of Quality

DFT magnitudes^2

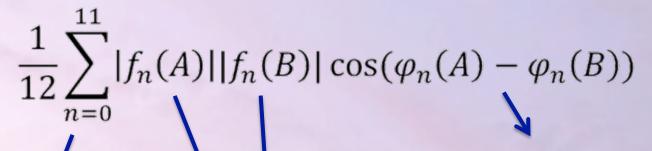
$$|f_1|^2 |f_2|^2 |f_3|^2 |f_4|^2 |f_5|^2 |f_6|^2$$

{AB
$$\CD\EGA\$$
}: $\langle\langle 3.73, 1, 5, 7, 0.27, 1 \rangle\rangle$

$$\{AC \sharp D \sharp E \sharp \}: \langle \langle 1, 1, 4, 1, 1, 16 \rangle \rangle$$

Common-Tone Theorem

The number of common tones between sets X and Y =



For each component (sum over components)

Cosine of the phase difference (ranges from -1 for opposite phases to 1 for same phase)

Weighted by the component magnitudes

Common-Tone Theorem

The number of common tones between sets X and Y =

$$\frac{1}{12} \sum_{n=0}^{11} |f_n(A)| |f_n(B)| \cos(\varphi_n(A) - \varphi_n(B))$$

In other words:

Distances in phase space for the most prominent components determine the number of common tones

Common-Tone Theorem

Example:

$$|f_{0}| (|f_{1}|, Ph_{1}) (|f_{2}|, Ph_{2}) (|f_{3}|, Ph_{3}) (|f_{4}|, Ph_{4}) \quad (|f_{5}|, Ph_{5}) (|f_{6}|, Ph_{6})$$

$$\{AB \downarrow CD \downarrow EGA \downarrow \}: \langle \langle 7, (1.93, 2.5) (1, 8) (2.24, 11.1), (2.65, 8.64) (0.52, 0.5), (1, 0) \rangle \rangle$$

$$\{AC \sharp D \sharp E \sharp \}: \quad \langle \langle 4, (1, 9) (1, 6) (2, 9) (1, 0) (1, 9) (4, 6) \rangle \rangle$$

$$\{AU \downarrow tiply mag., \\ Cosine of Ph. diff.$$

$$28, \quad (1.9, -1.0) (1, 0.5) (4.5, 0.45) (2.7, -0.19) (0.52, -0.26) (4, -1)$$

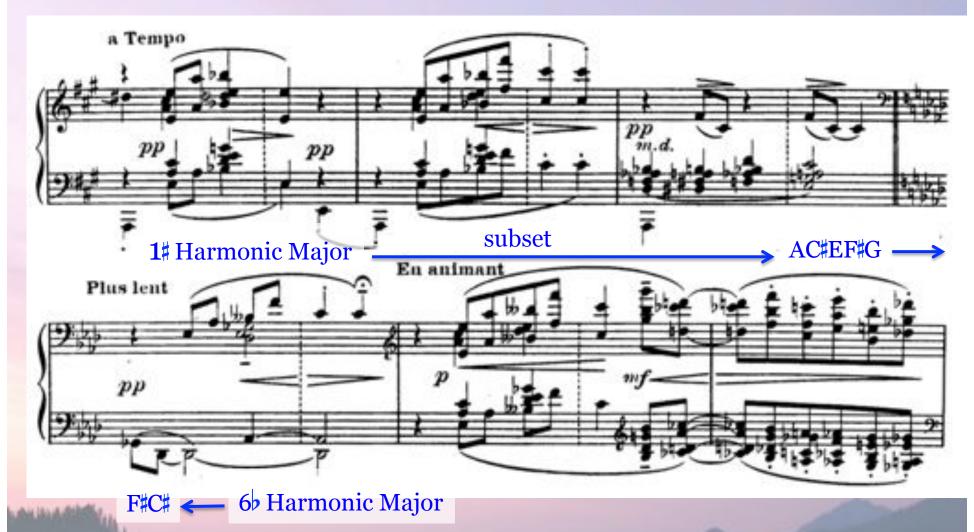
$$Cosine of Ph. diff.$$

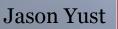
$$Multiply and \\ divide by twelve$$

$$2.33 + -0.31 + 0.08 + 0.33 + -0.08 + -0.02 + -0.33$$

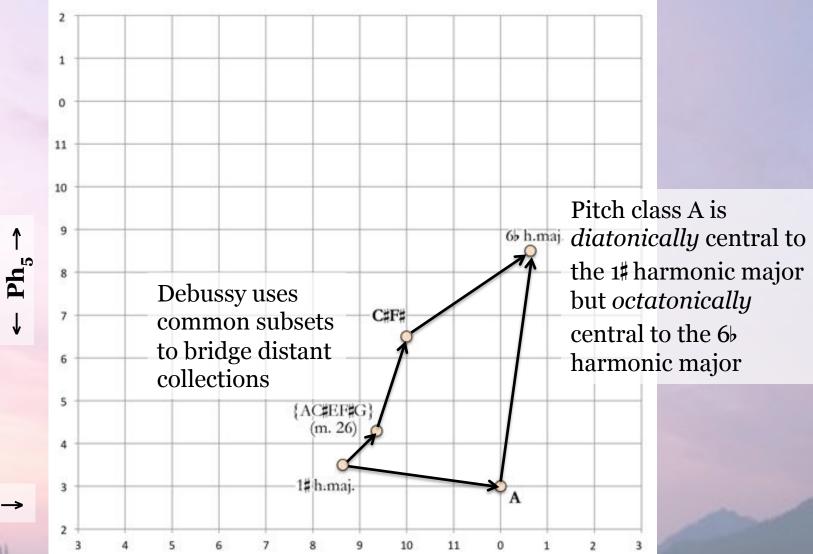
$$= 2 \text{ common tones } (A \text{ and } C \sharp)$$









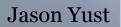




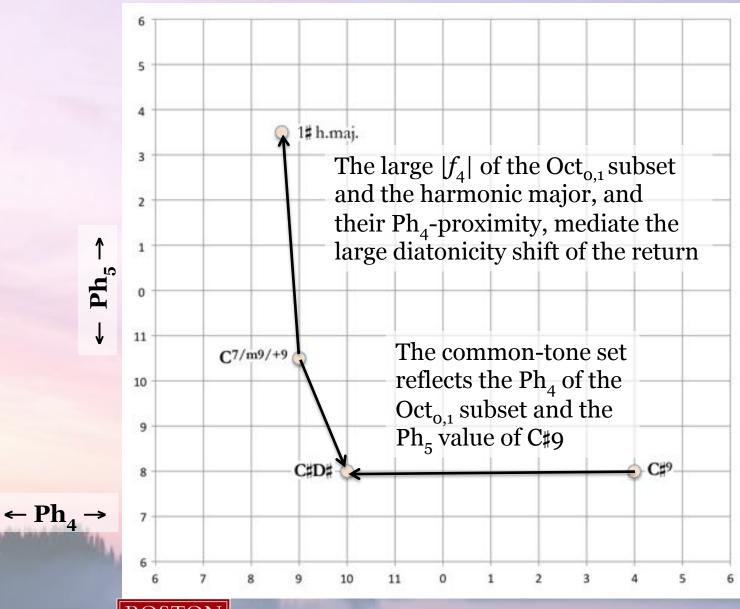












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Common-Tone Theorem

Example:

$$|f_{0}| (|f_{1}|, Ph_{1}) (|f_{2}|, Ph_{2}) (|f_{3}|, Ph_{3}) (|f_{4}|, Ph_{4}) (|f_{5}|, Ph_{5}) (|f_{6}|, Ph_{6})$$

$$C^{7/m9/+9} \qquad \langle \langle 7, (0.52, 5.5) (1, 8) (2.2, 6.9), (2.6, 8.6) (1.9, 3.5) (1, 0) \rangle \rangle$$

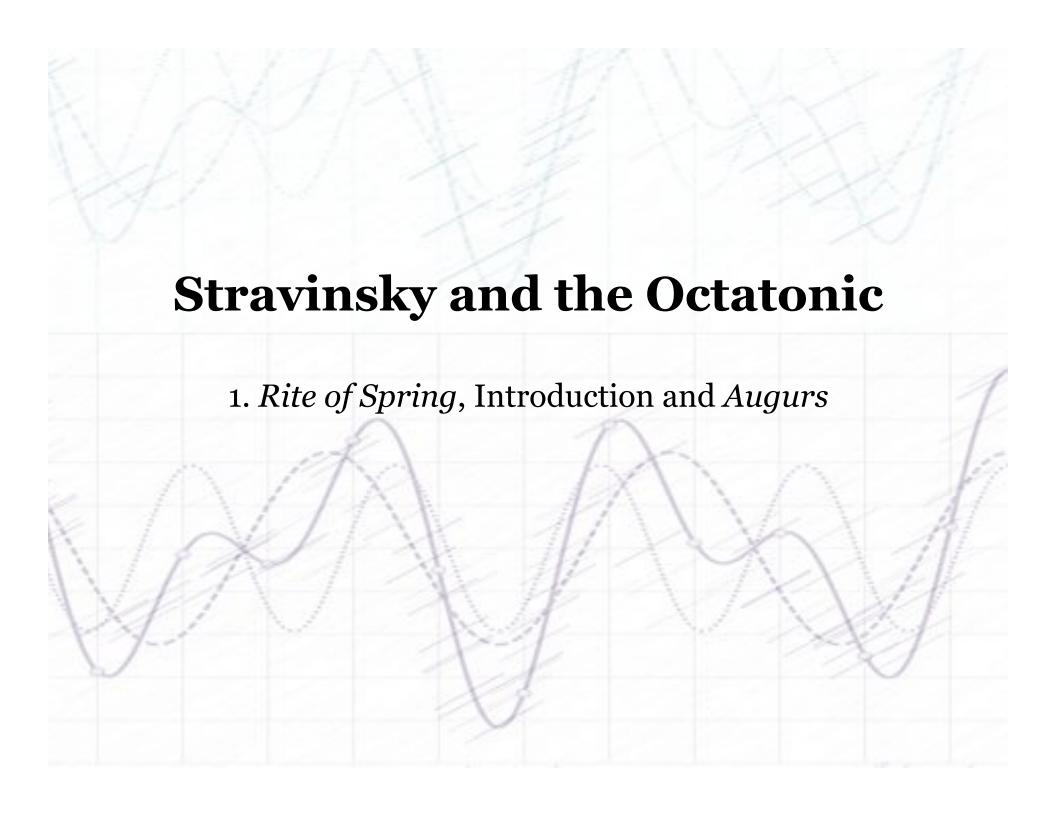
$$1 \sharp \text{ h.maj.} \qquad \langle \langle 6, (1.4, 10.5) (0, -) (1.4, 1.5) (3.5, 9) (1.4, 10.5) (0, -) \rangle \rangle$$

$$Multiply \text{ mag.,} \qquad 42, (0.7, -0.9) (0, -) (3.2, -0.95) (2.7, -0.19) (0.52, -0.26) (0, -)$$

$$Cosine \text{ of Ph. diff.}$$

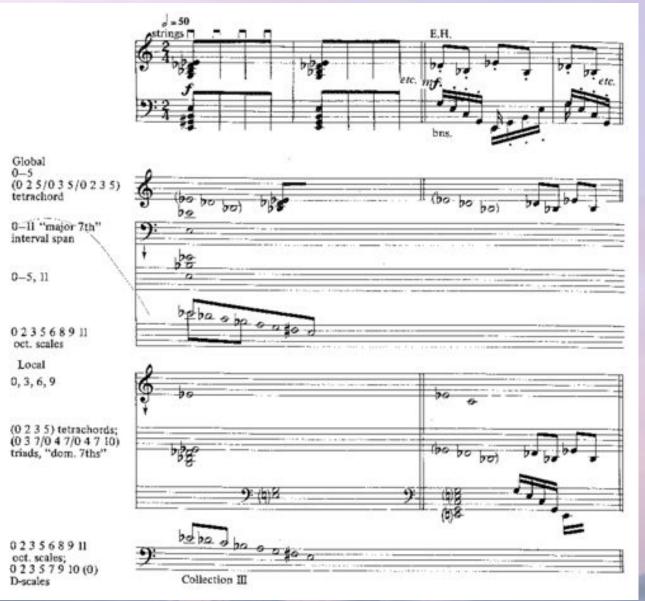
$$Multiply \text{ and divide by twelve} \qquad 3.5 + -0.1 + 0 + -0.5 + 1.5 + -0.4 + 0$$

$$Sum \qquad = 4 \text{ common tones } (C \sharp, E, G, B \rbrace)$$



Is this music octatonic?





Van den Toorn:
5 of the 7 notes in
the "Augurs" chord
and the C triad
come from Oct_{0,1}
(E + Eb⁷).
The G# and B
reinforce E

What are the chances?!?!

100%

All 8-note collections overlap at least one octatonic by six or more pitch classes.

Joseph Straus (review of Music of Stravinsky):

Van den Toorn "never provides and systematic criteria for determining the presence of the octatonic collection; as a result, a number of his attributions are suspect. Almost any passage containing nine to twelve pitch classes can be discussed as 'diatonic interpenetration' of an octatonic context."



Dmitri Tymoczko (on the analyses in Music of Stravinsky):

"If even *these* passages can be understood as the result of 'octatonic-diatonic interpenetration,' then we should rightly ask whether there is any music that *cannot* be understood in this way.

In a sense, there is not: any proper subset can be decomposed into diatonic and octatonic components."





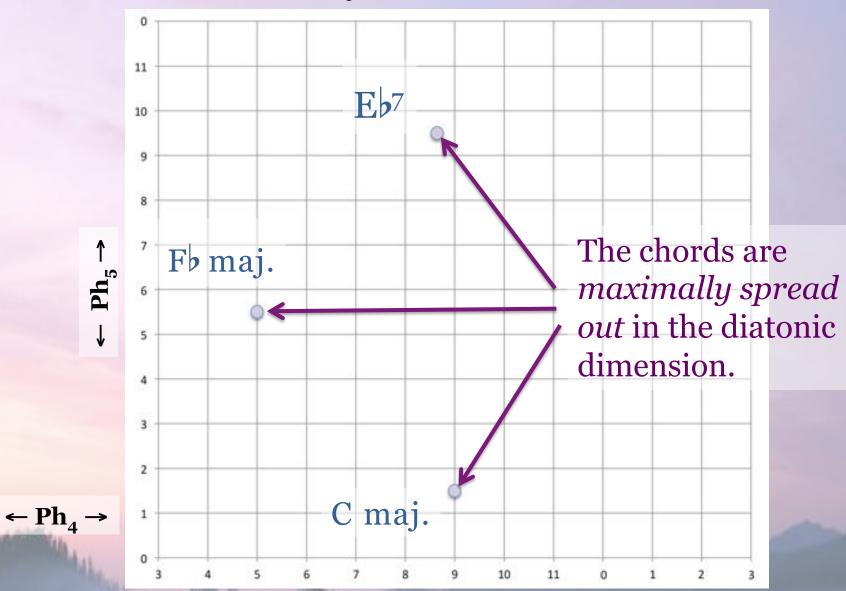
Components f_4 and f_5 are the largest across the set-types

DFT magnitudes^2

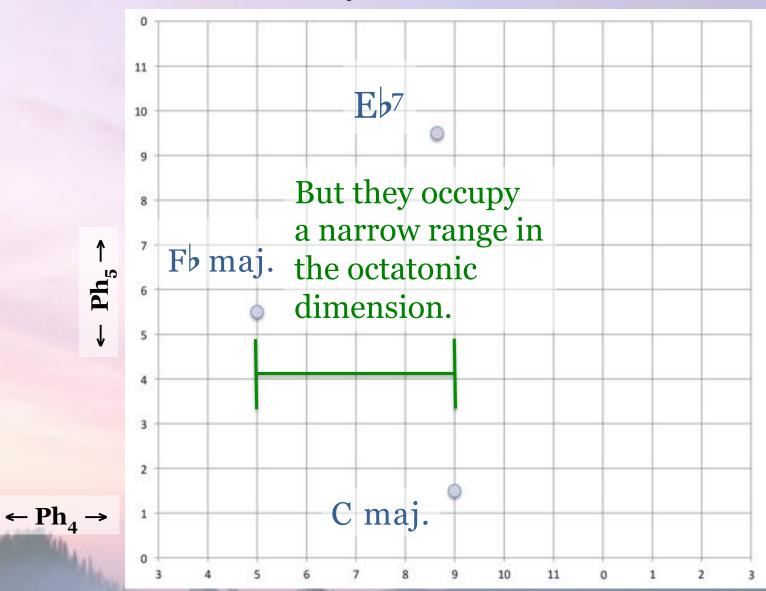
$$|f_1|^2 |f_2|^2 |f_3|^2 |f_4|^2 |f_5|^2 |f_6|^2$$

Major/minor triad: $\langle\langle 0.27, 1, 5, 3, 3.73, 1 \rangle\rangle$

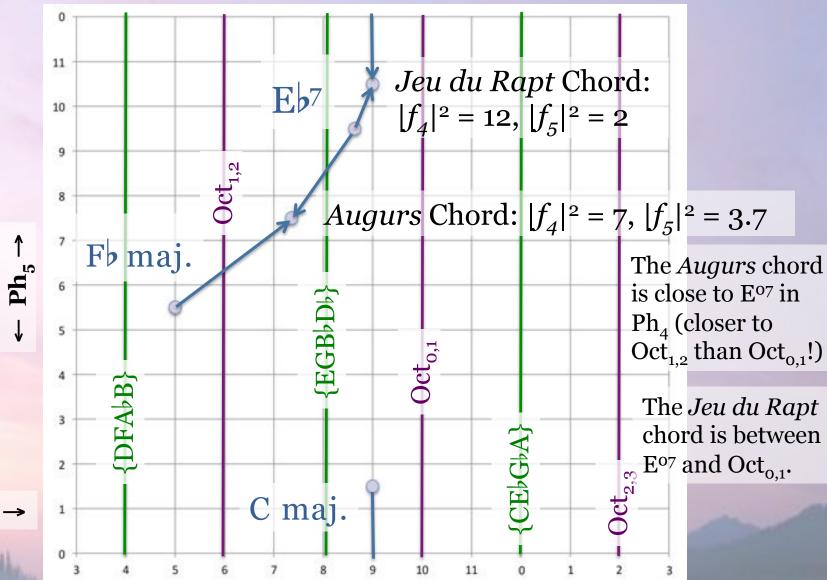
Dominant 7th: $\langle\langle 0.27, 1, 2, 7, 3.73, 4 \rangle\rangle$



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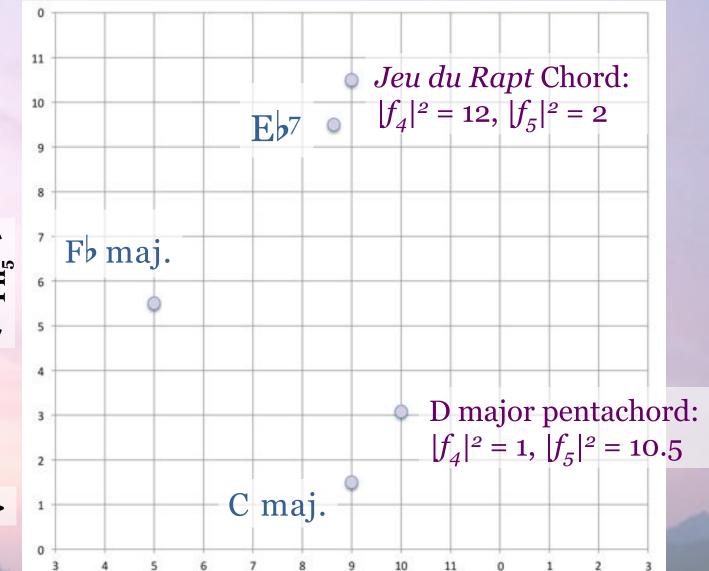
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 $\leftarrow Ph_4 \rightarrow$

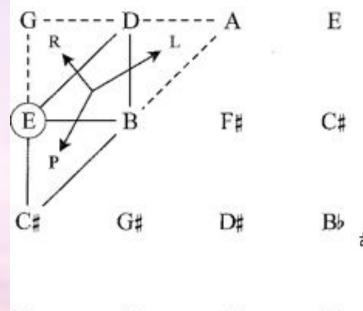
Stravinsky and the Octatonic: Jeu du Rapt





 $\leftarrow Ph_4 \rightarrow$

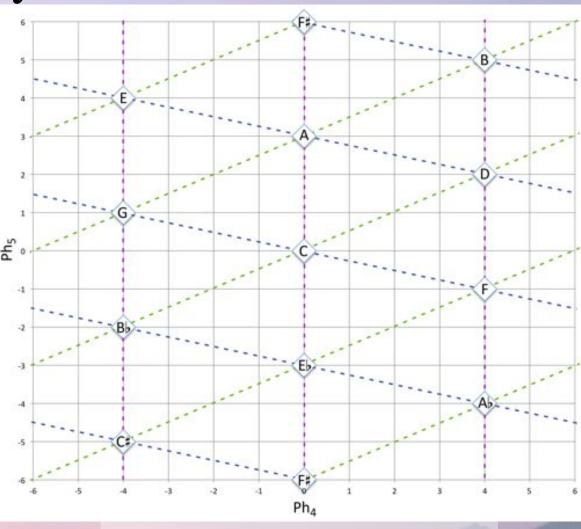






octatonic collections

Octatonic Tonnetz
Van den Toorn and
McGuiness 2012



Pitch classes in Ph_{4,5}-space



Diatonic materials:

D major hexachord

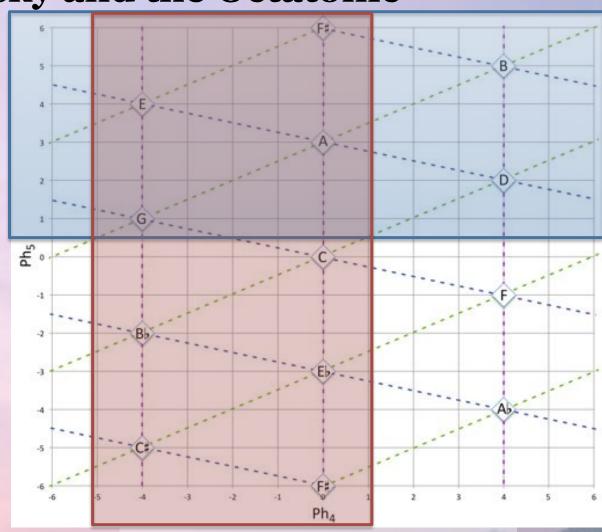
Overlap:

A-dorian tetrachord

(cf. Jeu du Rapt)

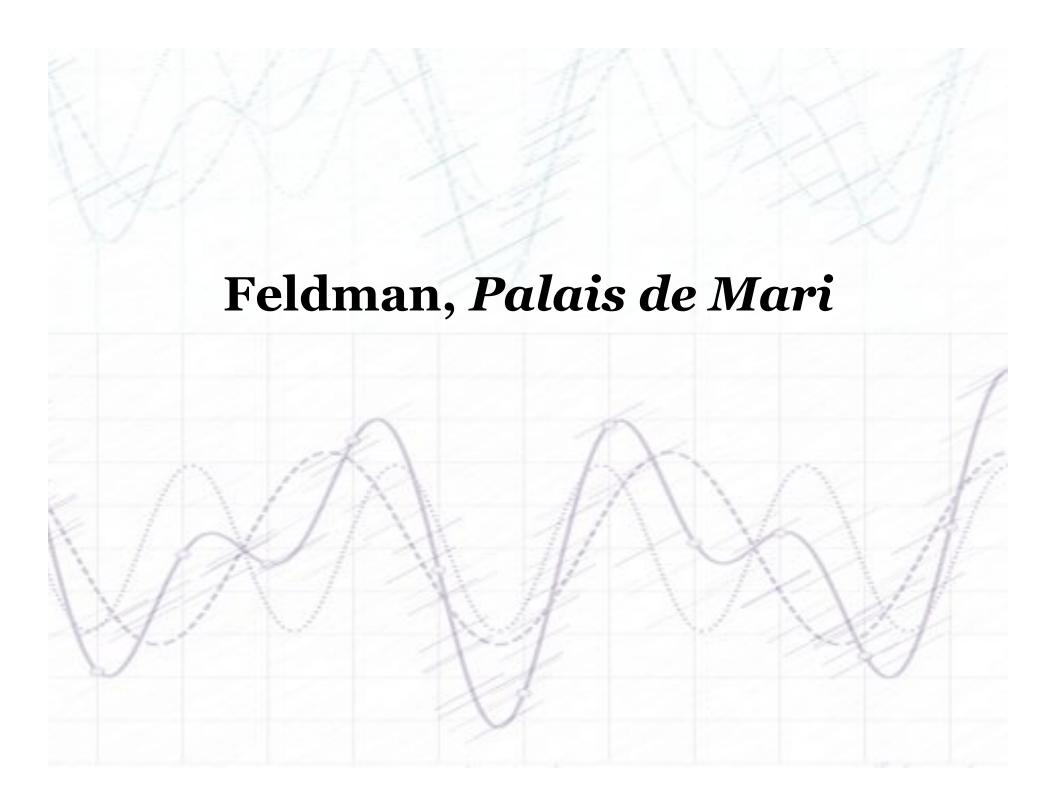
Octatonic materials:

 $Oct_{0,1}$



Pitch classes in Ph_{4,5}-space







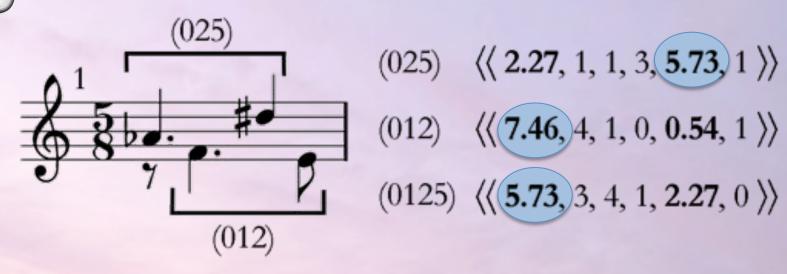
Features of the piece:

- Composed in 1986, Feldman's last work for solo piano.
- Long but sparse: the 9-page score takes ca. 25 minutes to play.
- Made up of discrete gestures, frequently repeated and varied (often in subtle ways).
- Pedal is held continuously throughout most of the piece. This blurs the distinction between successive and simultaneous sounds.
- Extended segmentational analysis in Hanninen, A Theory of Music Analysis (2012).

Features of the piece:

- Long sections on the piece tend to dwell on a limited set of gestures, giving the piece a sense of trajectory that is nonetheless non-teleological.
- Composed around the same time as his Second String Quartet, which Feldman described as "a dialectic of sorts between such elements as . . . chromaticism/consonance."
- "Reverse Development": Gestures often appear before the idea from which they are derived, replacing a process of development with one of revelation.

The initial gesture (Hanninen set *A*) stages a chromatic–diatonic conflict



The first three notes are highly diatonic, but the final E introduces a concentrated chromaticism.

Hanninen: "The contrast between harmonies rich in ics 2 and 5, versus those rich in ic1, resonates throughout the piece."

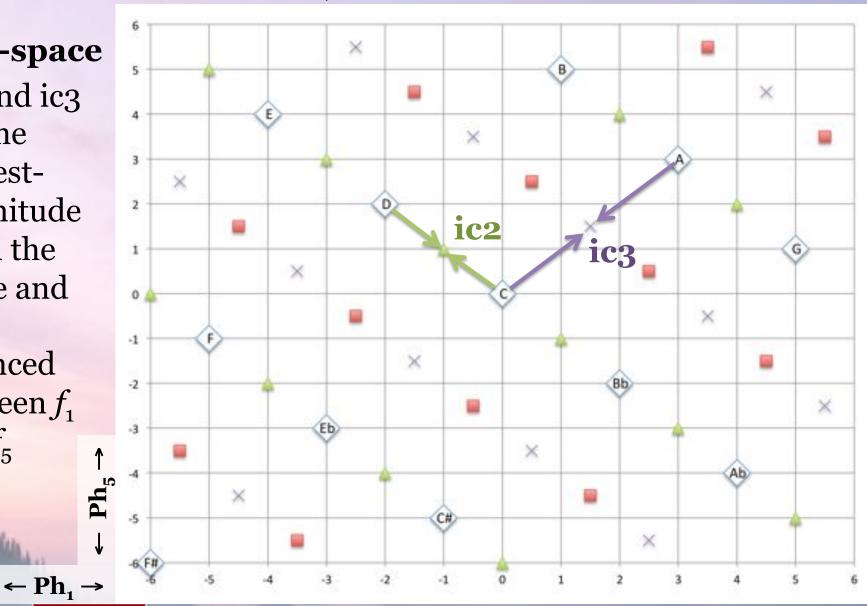


The initial gesture (Hanninen set *A*) stages a chromatic–diatonic conflict



The gesture can also be divided by part into a fourth and a minor second.

Ph_{1,5}-space ic2 and ic3 are the highestmagnitude ics in the space and are balanced between f_1



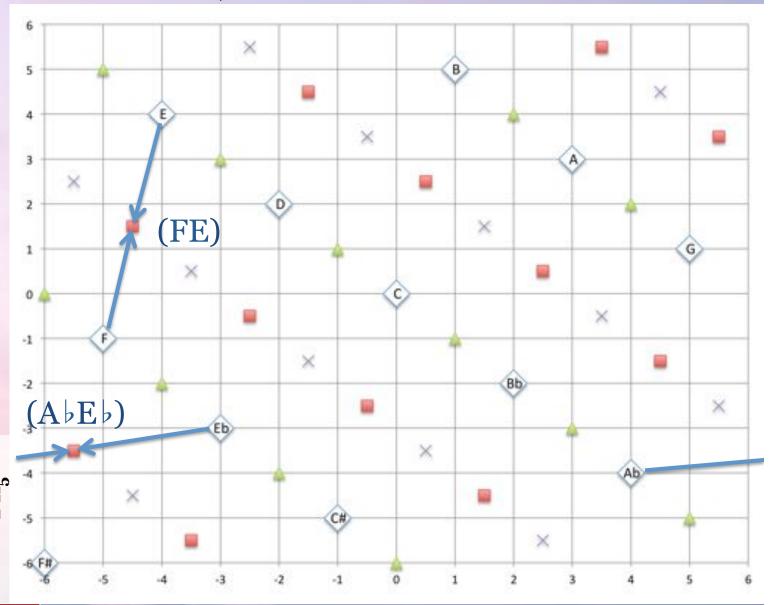
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and f_5



Ph_{1,5}-space

Dyads from the upper and lower voices of m. 1— ic1 and ic5 occupy the same positions in the space.



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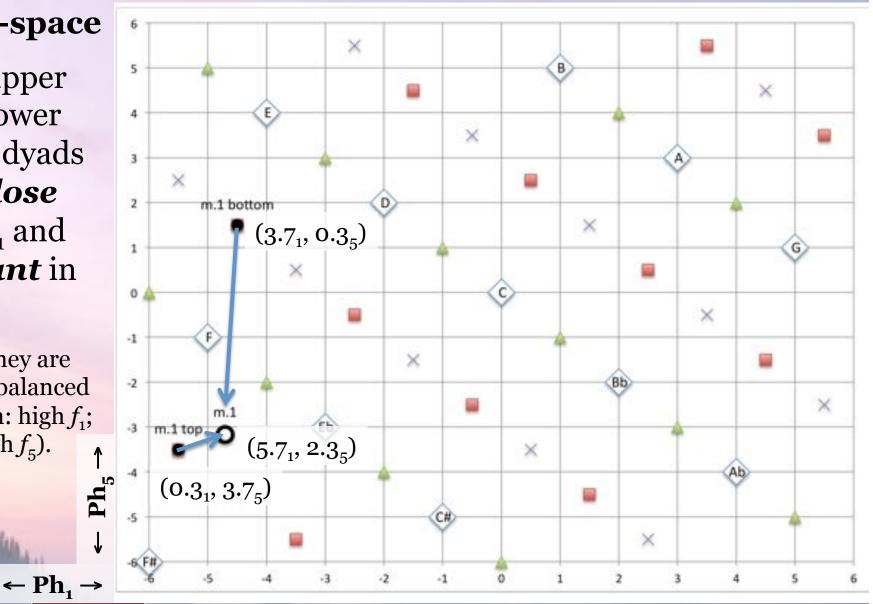


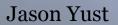
 $\leftarrow Ph_1 \rightarrow$

Ph_{1,5}-space

The upper and lower voice dyads are **close** in Ph₁ and distant in Ph₅.

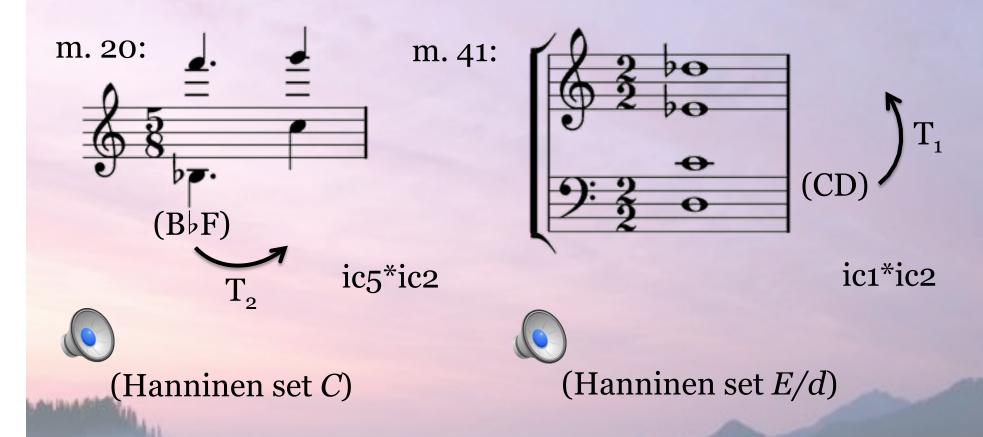
N.B.: They are also imbalanced (bottom: high f_1 ; top: high f_5).



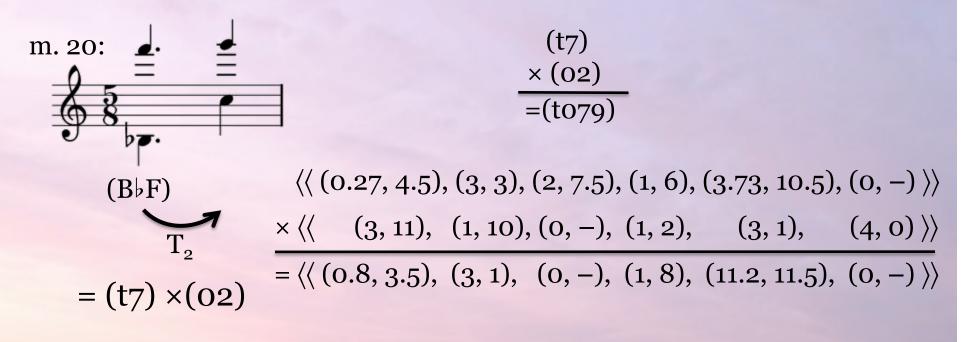




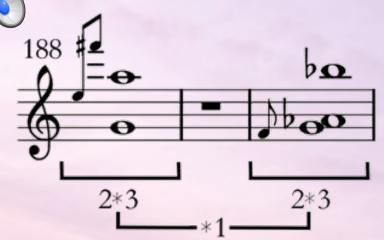
One of Feldman's basic harmonic techniques is **Transpositional Combination**



Convolution Theorem: Transpositional combination (with doublings retained) is the same as **multiplying DFT magnitudes** and adding the phases.



Transposition of entire gestures by semitone reinforces component 1 and cancels out component 5



$$\langle \langle (3,7)_{1}, (3,5)_{5} \rangle \rangle$$

 $\times \langle \langle (2,10.5)_{1}, (2,10.5)_{5} \rangle \rangle$
 $= \langle \langle (\mathbf{6},5.5)_{1}, (\mathbf{6},3.5)_{5} \rangle \rangle$

(0235) = 2*3 is balanced between f_1 and f_5 , but multiplying by (01) weakens f_5 in favor of f_1

(4679)
$$\langle \langle (6, 5.5)_1, (6, 3.5)_5 \rangle \rangle$$

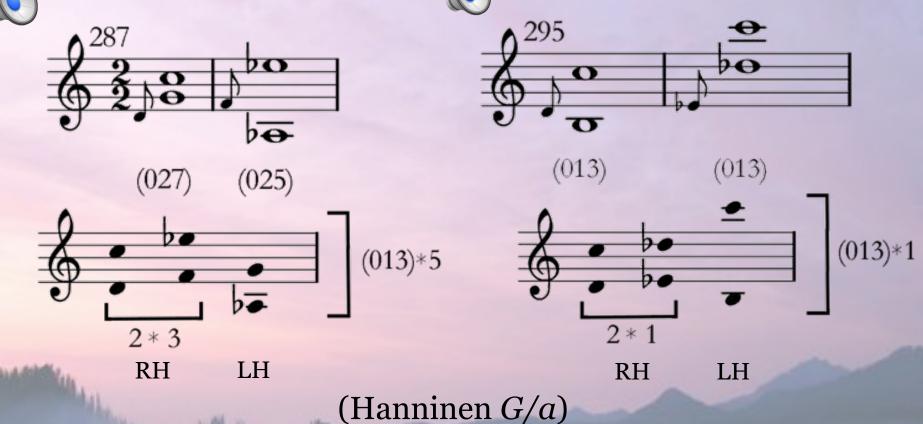
 \times (01) $\times \langle \langle (3.73, 11.5)_1, (0.27, 9.5)_5 \rangle \rangle$
= (4567²89) = $\langle \langle (22.4, 5)_1, (1.6, 8)_5 \rangle \rangle$

This idea is repeated frequently throughout the last part of the piece.

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This variant of the idea makes it evident that *both* are products of (013) with ic5 or ic1:

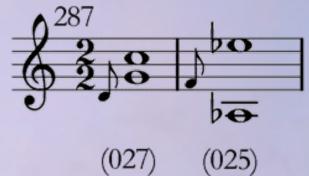
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DFT and a Theory of Harmony for the 20th Century

Hanninen:

"The arrival of G/a287-88... is the keystone in a remarkable confluence of events. First, it defines the center of subset G/a, and also of set G. Second, it forms a bridge to set G, recalling and rearranging intervals and key pcs of set G. Third, it forms a second, and stronger, bridge to set G."



Gesture from set *A*:



Gesture from set *C*:





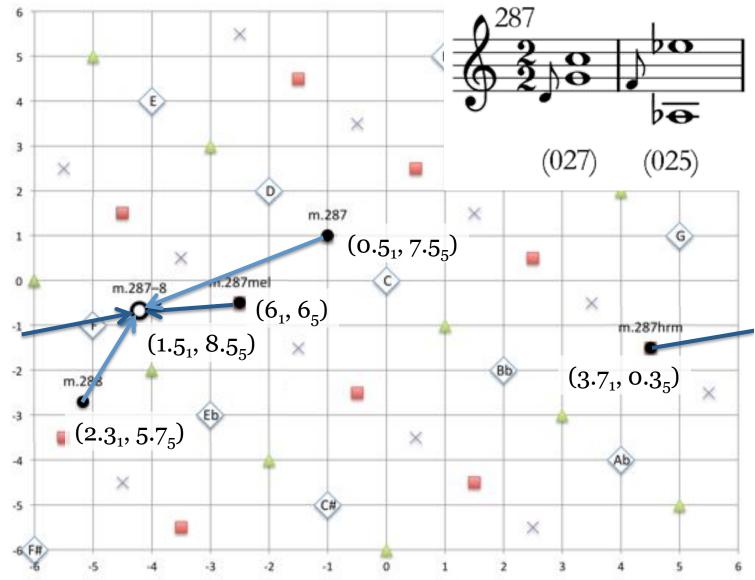
Ph_{1,5}-space

The (0235) and G-A¹ subsets are spread out in Ph₁ and close in Ph₅

The individual chords are more spread out in Ph₅, meaning they

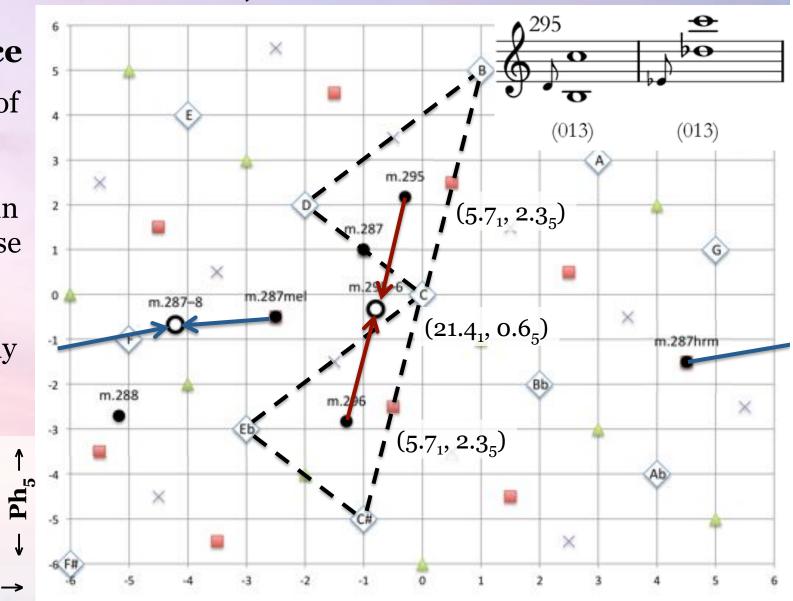
have \uparrow stronger f_5

 $\leftarrow Ph_1 \rightarrow$



Ph_{1,5}-space

The (013)s of the variant gesture are spread out in Ph₅ and close in Ph₁, making the sum strongly chromatic.

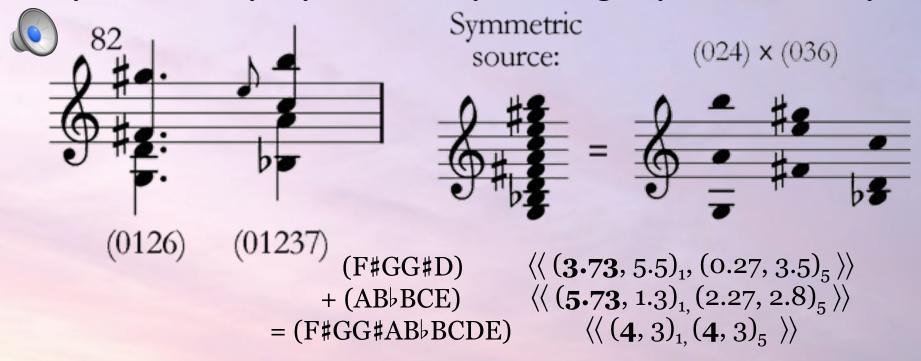


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 $\leftarrow Ph_1 \rightarrow$

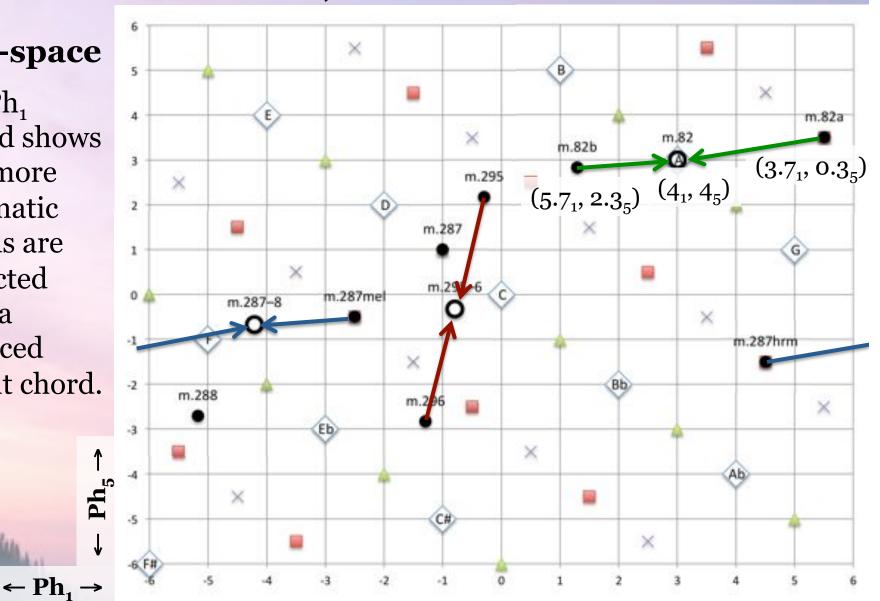
One important gesture reveals how Feldman "cripples" symmetries by asymmetrically dividing a symmetric entity



The symmetric source chord is balanced between f_1 and f_5 , but it is split into more heavily chromatic chords.

Ph_{1,5}-space

The Ph₁ spread shows how more chromatic chords are extracted from a balanced parent chord.



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Summary

- DFT is a **change of basis** applied to the domain of pc-distributions.
- Each DFT component measures a musically interpretable quality relating to a type of **periodicity**.
- **DFT magnitudes** can replace much of pcset-theory's use of interval content to relate harmonic entities.
- The fifth Fourier component measures diatonicity, and provides a more systematic approach to reconciling subsets and supersets with scale theory.
- The **fourth Fourier component** represents **octatonicity** and is used by composers like Debussy and Stravinsky to relate diatonically distant harmonies.
- Distances in **phase space** provide a common-tone-based measure of relatedness between collections of any size.



- Ames, Paula Kopstick. "*Piano* (1977)." In *The Music of Morton Feldman*, ed. T. Delio (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press), 99–146.
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