

Companion Website, Chapter 3.

Quick Reference Guide

CHAPTER 3: FORMAL STRUCTURE AND HARMONIC FUNCTION

A. Formal Structure

- Become acquainted with binary, ternary, rondo, and sonata allegro form.
- Know the skeletal foundation to truly understand a work in this style.
- Look for interesting “out-of-the-ordinary” prototypes.
- Visit Gjerdingen’s *Music in the Galant Style* for extended discussion.
- Melody, consonance, and dissonance are laid upon formal structure.

B. Harmonic Structure

- Thoroughbass (figured bass) is the solid footing for any Classical Era composition.
- A full twenty-five percent of Bach’s *Versuch* is devoted to harmonic considerations.
- It’s not just the harmony, but the relationship between harmony and melody.
- Harmonic function drives expression.

C. Alberti bass and other Accompanying Figures

- Once this figure appeared on the scene, it took hold and became very popular.
- The bright, clear attack on the fortepiano lends itself perfectly to this figuration.
- The perfect genre for Alberti bass configurations was the sonata; the perfect instrument to execute it on was the fortepiano.

- Alberti bass establishes harmonic function in a simple periodic structure with symmetrical four-bar phrases; complementary to the Classical sonata.
 - It is very conducive to the structure of the fortepiano, lending energy to the declamatory nature of the instrument and rhetorical style of the time.
 - Alberti bass motives create rhythmic and harmonic energy, drive, and momentum—pulse and forward propulsion—whether dramatic or lyrical.
 - Alberti bass shapes vary according to the need.
 - Alberti bass may create a more sonorous harmony through configurations conducive to finger legato.
 - Accompaniment figures can make a melody better if it joins the character of the melody. If the bass notes follow the melody, use the same articulation as the melody.
- D. Arpeggiated Chords
- Arpeggiation provides a means to embellish and enhance expression.
 - Much arpeggiation was unnotated.
 - *Affekt* is the influencing factor.

INFLUENCES APPLIED

- A. Analyze and thoroughly “know” the function of the notes.
- Determine harmonic, sectional, and phrase structure and function.
 - Examine the score to expose any “extra” measures, hybrid structures, or any unexpected changes that should be emphasized for “good execution.”
 - Look for each of the distinctive Classical Era harmonic traits delineated in the text that may bring extra energy, beauty, or shape to the structure.
- B. Alberti bass figurations are not conducive to execution on the modern piano. A common mistake is attempting to minimize the Alberti bass figuration due to more overtones on the modern piano. This is extremely difficult to accomplish and draws attention to the figure. There are adjustments that may be made.
- Highlight rhythmic drive, dramatic or beautiful qualities, or any secondary melody to bring energy and focus to the motive, as was historically intended to create and support *affekt*.
 - Envision “orchestrating” Alberti bass figurations and harmonic contours.

- When constructing Alberti bass figurations begin by creating pulses. As intensity increases, pulsing tempo stretches or hurries, depending on desired effect. Pulsing Alberti bass provides benefits such as defining the beat, enlivening the rhythm, and softening the intermediary notes.
 - When shaping Alberti bass begin with the bass notes (in pulses) alone in conjunction with the melody. “Divide” the hand in half with bass notes being the downward motion and the remaining notes upward. This creates a stroke for each unit, clarifies voice leading, and results in cleaner execution that will be naturally easier to play.
- C. Arpeggiated Figures
- Search out opportunities to incorporate arpeggiation to enhance the *affekt*. Look first wherever any full chords in long notes appear.
 - Each choice should maintain and enhance structure, harmonic function, and melodic line.

