

Tonality and Motif in Idomeneo

Author(s): Daniel Hertz

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its terminology) in some of Arcadelt's chansons of 1547. The French air, like the English ayre, often existed in two versions: for solo voice with accompaniment, and in a polyphonic setting in which a consistent vocal texture supported the top voice. Le Fevre's polyphonic airs, however, exploit a variegated texture brought about by combining different voices for the various returns of the refrain and for different verses. In this approach Le Fevre seems to have been largely influenced by composers of *musique mesurée*, that short-lived, late 16th-century genre which reflected the poetic and musical ideals of Baif's Academy.

In order to introduce an element of variety into what was an essentially chordal and syllabic style, some composers of *musique mesurée* would on occasion alter the scoring for each verse; in his *Reveyr venir du printans* (1603) Le Jeune, for example, produces a cumulative effect by starting with two voices at the first verse, then adding a voice each time; this also contrasts with the refrain (*rechant*) which appears regularly in full five-voice scoring. Such textural variety is characteristic of Le Fevre's airs and dialogues in the *Meslanges*, marking them off from his chansons.

The four extant partbooks are for soprano (*dessus*), alto (*haute-contre*) and tenor (*taille*), while

a 'sixth' book contains parts for different voices. From the first three it is possible to salvage eight three-part chansons. Neither *Chambrière* (this month's Music Supplement) nor *Tu ne l'entends pas* (to be published later this year as a supplement) can, however, be regarded as entirely original compositions. They are reworkings of chansons that had already appeared in collections by Claude Le Jeune (1585) and Jehan Planson (1587), who themselves may merely have arranged popular songs (in the case of Planson his publication is, in fact, called *Airs mis en musique . . . tant de son invention que d'autres musiciens*). Le Fevre's *Chambrière* is more subtle and imaginative than Planson's very straightforward setting, while his *Tu ne l'entends pas* is less highly wrought than Le Jeune's. Le Fevre set what appears to be only the first lines of these songs; in the two pieces by the other composers there are additional words, Le Jeune absorbing them into his through-composed chanson, Planson using the extra verses strophically.

For a musician who rose to the position of court-composer, Jacques Le Fevre's output seems curiously slender. More's the pity, then, that his *Meslanges* has come down to us in such a tantalizingly incomplete form, for the few works that can be rescued from it are delightful additions to choral repertory.

Tonality and Motif in Idomeneo

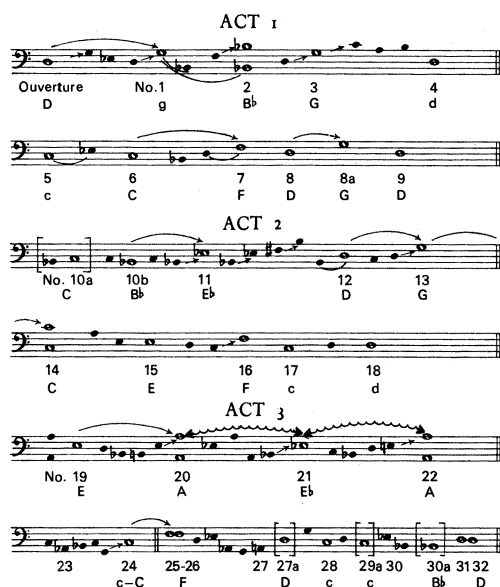
Daniel Heartz

As in all Mozart's mature operas, there is a keynote in *Idomeneo*, a main tonality in relation to which everything is carefully ordered. The keynote is D, taken in its wider sense of D major-minor. It is D that provides the tonal frame for the entire opera, and is used to conclude each act. The accompanying diagram, which will be explained in the course of this article, shows the framing function of D at a glance.

The expression D major-minor is chosen advisedly, because the parallel minor mode is heard prominently throughout the opera. The chorus ending Act 2 becomes major only at the final cadence. The ballet that ends the opera depends for contrast upon long stretches of D minor. Several pieces in the major mode have substantial sections in the parallel minor, or the minor form of the dominant: thus the second subject of the overture is in A minor. Idamantes's first aria, 'Non ho colpa', uses an abundance of B flat minor. Idomeneus's first aria, 'Verdrommi intorno', is more in C minor than C major. Idamantes's second aria, 'Il padre adorato', is likewise coloured very largely by the darker minor sonorities, and so on throughout the work. Major mode is indicated on the diagram by upper case letters, minor by lower case letters. A diagram of this sort inevitably has its drawbacks and omissions. Ideally, it would have been desirable to indicate at

least the principal tonal centres in the course of every piece. For instance, in Electra's first aria, 'Tutte nel cor vi sento', the extraordinary reprise in the 'wrong' key of C minor could have been indicated by a few additional symbols (d F / c d); and the diagram would then show visually how the C minor of the following storm chorus is anticipated and prepared.

There is often a special drama inherent in the returns to the keynote. Mozart saves it for crucial moments such as the Recognition Scene, Act 1 scene 10. When Idamantes finally, after a long dialogue of questions on both sides, says of Idomeneus 'E il padre mio!', D major arrives with an orchestral tutti, *presto e forte* (NMA, p.109). The string arpeggios rocketing up to high D are the same as in the overture (pp.6-7). The similarity of the sonority, if not the pitch, ought to tell every last listener that this is, ye Gods! the keynote ('Spietatissimi Dei!', responds Idomeneus just after the D major arpeggio). So great a point of arrival appears on the diagram as a single black note, without stem, indicating a recitative rather than a set piece. It should be emphasized in this respect that only the main tonal centres in the recitatives have been included. A more detailed chart would show that even a passing reference to the keynote in a modulatory passage may have dramatic significance. Thus in Idamantes's very first speech, at the words about his



Numbers refer to the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe*, ed. D. Heartz, 1972

- || change of scene [] pieces cut by Mozart at the premiere
- main tonal centres in recitatives • tonal centres of the set pieces
- or — dominant to tonic relationships (attraction)
- or — relative major or minor (complementary)
- ~ tritone relationship (repulsion)

father being a victim of the storm, 'al furor dell'onde il padre mio', Mozart suddenly turns the progression to D (p.34, b.8). He does not indicate whether he wants D major or D minor here, but I suggested the D major harmonization in the NMA because of the analogy with the 'padre mio' in the Recognition Scene. Another scene in Act 1 specifically calls for D minor at a dramatically significant moment. In Scene 4, as Arbace begins to tell Idamantes most terrible news, Idamantes takes the words out of his mouth by guessing the worst: 'Più non vivi il genitor?' (p.64, bb.11–12). This very passage is repeated at the beginning of the Recognition Scene, when Idomeneus first catches sight of the unfortunate victim approaching him: 'la sventurata vittima, ahime! s'appressa' (p.105). It is almost as if Mozart were reminding us of the relationship that Idomeneus and Idamantes have yet to discover; or, to put it another way, use of the keynote and the identical melodic passage here conveys the feeling that father and son do realize already, in a deep, instinctual sense, what they are as yet unable or unwilling to state in words. So that we are sure to catch the significance of this particular phrase Mozart has Idamantes sing it again, when he mentions his father for the first time by name: 'In quelli abissi spinto giace l'eroe Idomeneo estinto' (pp.107–8, bb.42–4).

I cite this case as an example of the wealth of tonal allusion in the score, a wealth of detail that the accompanying diagram does not and cannot render. There follows an enumeration, without commentary, of the main uses of the keynote, after the Recognition Scene: march for the disembarkation and festive

chaconne to end Act 1; Idomeneus's *aria di bravura* 'Fuor del mar', no.12; Idomeneus's confession of guilt, 'Ecoti in me, barbaro nume, il reo', and the chorus of flight, end of Act 2; Idamantes's momentary triumph over the monster, 'Stupenda vittoria!', and his heroic aria 'Nò, la morte io non pavento' (which Mozart cut); Electra's final exit in D minor (replacing her aria 'D'Oreste, d'Ajace'; also cut by Mozart); the final chorus, 'Scenda Ammor'; the ballet. In sum, the keynote D may function as a festive, or heroic, or tragic tonality, and it often sees use in connection with the central dramatic conflict caused by Idomeneus's vow.

The most frequent relationship between pieces in the opera is the dominant to tonic one. This is indicated on the diagram by an arrow, large when it involves the set pieces, small when it involves recitatives. The relation of the overture to Ilia's first aria, 'Padre, germani, addio!', provides an example; it also exemplifies Mozart's typical manoeuvre of going to the ultimate tonal resolution at the beginning of the recitative, leaving it, then returning only at the end, so that the first tonal move predicts the last and even the recitatives gain a certain formal logic. One of the most striking examples of this is to be found in the approaches to the E flat of the great quartet, no.21.

Ilia's aria in G minor passes to the relative, B flat major, as expected, for its second section, where her words directly concern Idamantes. What could be more natural and fitting than for Idamantes himself to make his appearance in, and sing his aria in, B flat? This key, which demonstrates his close relation to Ilia in tonal language, remains 'his' key throughout the opera. He enters to it again in the Recognition Scene, and at the beginning of Act 3. For the Vienna performance in 1786 Mozart added to his role the B flat Rondò, 'Non temer, amato bene' (no.10b), about which more will be said presently. Electra and 'her' key of D minor are not distant from Idamantes's B flat major, but not as close as Ilia's G minor. Recall what Mozart said about Osmin's rage aria in *Die Entführung*: in order to show how Osmin took leave of his senses he went from F not to the nearest relative, D minor, the submediant, but to the tonally more remote A minor, the mediant ('so habe ich keinen fremden ton zum f . . . sondern einen befreundten dazu, aber nicht die Nächsten, D minor, sondern den weitem, A minor, gewählt'; letter of 26 September 1781). Precisely the same relationship applies to the triangle of lovers in *Idomeneo*: Electra's D minor is mediant to Idamantes's B flat major; Ilia's G minor is submediant.

Act 2 provides several examples of Mozart's typical dominant to tonic structuring. Idomeneus's 'Fuor del mar' actually turns the final chord to a dominant 7th on D in its shortened version (no.12b, p.269, b.154), pointing directly to Electra's following aria in G, 'Idol mio' (no.13). The end of Electra's aria is covered by the strains of the embarkation march, turning the harmony to G⁷ as the scene shifts to the harbour. Anticipation of the next link in the chain has been strongly implanted. The sequence D–D⁷–G–G⁷–C can only predict the arrival of F. But Mozart has set us up only to fool us royally with the E major of 'Placido è il mar' (no.15). No

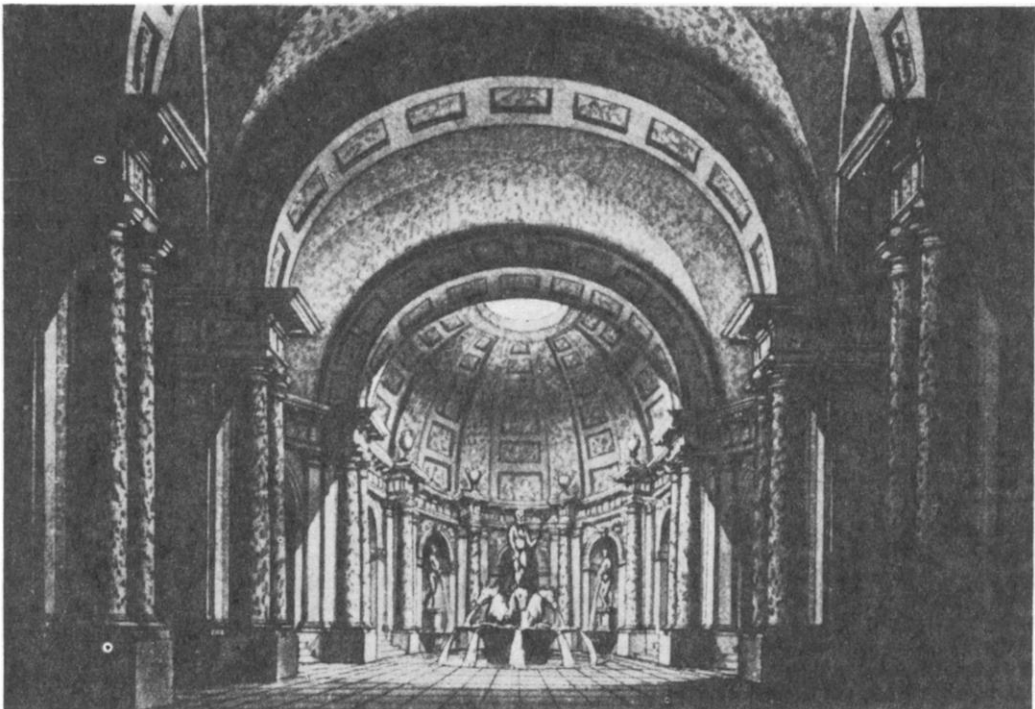
wonder this chorus sounds so radiant and novel—it is a tonal surprise, a plunge into a totally new and unexpected realm of sonorities. The whole centre of the act is constructed in order to bring off this tonal miracle. Once it has happened, and the miraculous moment is over, we realize that the E major chorus was but a tonal detour, a feint that only delays the arrival of the anticipated F major until the terzet, no.16. The temptation is strong to place a large arrow on the diagram, leading from no.14 to no.16.

Looking back now to the beginning of Act 2, it is possible to assess the tonal effect achieved by substituting an aria for Idamantes in B flat in place of the C major aria of Arbaces (no.10a). Arbaces's aria was the weakest and most old-fashioned piece of music in the Munich score. Tonally, it did not provide any impetus for Ilia's ensuing *aria d'affetto* in E flat (no.11). Dramatically, it accomplished nothing. The long, lyrical aria for Idamantes, on the other hand, gives strong tonal and dramatic impetus for Ilia to sing 'Se il padre perdei'. For the two large episodes in Idamantes's Rondò, Mozart chose G minor and E flat major, in succession, i.e. tonal centres, both betokening Ilia. The connection of Ilia with the most mystic and expressive key of E flat major was established long before Act 2 began: this key provided the central goal of her initial recitative in Act 1, at the point where she seeks consolation in death (p.23, bb.38–40). But Mozart did not give up an emphasis on C major in his revision of the beginning of Act 2 for Vienna. It sounds forth very forcefully

at the beginning of the obbligato recitative between Ilia and Idamantes, a dialogue into which he was careful to work several musical reminiscences from Act 1 (cf for example, p.194, bb.30–2 with p.22, bb.27–8; p.194, bb.35–40 with p.109, bb.1–5; p.195, bb.44–5 with p.20, bb.4–5). Perhaps Mozart wanted to emphasize C major at the beginning of Act 2 so as to prepare from the outset for the act's central tonal event, the resolution of a C major dominant (ultimately) to F. If so, there is an analogy to be made with the way he begins Act 3.

Act 3 begins with an A major chord in the strings. The same chord reappears in the strings to set apart Idamantes's soliloquy leading to the great quartet (p.385, b.35). I consider this string chord the single most important finding offered by the NMA, a moment in the work that is crucial to its entire tonal structure. Every other edition, from the first onwards, left it out (including the old Mozart Gesamtausgabe, which placed more faith in the first edition than it deserved). Whereas Mozart made the first two acts move smoothly by progressing from one key to a closely related one, here he seems intent on emphasizing an unharmonious relationship, that of the tritone. For these hostile centres of A and E flat claim our attention at short range from each other. Mozart even makes the point in linear fashion by having the bass descend chromatically from A to E flat (p.385, bb.35–9). He did this once before, at an equally crucial moment, the mutual horror following recognition between father and son, and the curse of the former (pp.112–13, bb.32–8), a

Neptune's Temple: design by Lorenzo Quaglio for the original production



scene which is probably among the earliest composed (see NMA, Foreword, p.xxiv). The dramatic significance of these conflicting centres, A and E flat, seems to be this: by the time we reach Act 3 the plot has reached an impasse. No one can find a solution to the quandary. Not even a suggestion of a solution is forthcoming, unlike the case in Act 2. The sheer intensity and massiveness of the 'Todesquartett' etches E flat so deeply in our minds and ears that it is going to take an equal or greater weight to re-establish the primacy of the keynote, D. Instead, the ear is filled with the C minor of the 'Trauerchor' (no.24), a use of the relative minor of E flat that only reinforces the shuddering experience left by the quartet and makes the keynote seem more threatened than ever. Mozart originally brought back D major in Idamantes's lightweight aria 'Nò, la morte' (no.27a), which he was happy to cut, and partly, I believe, for tonal reasons. The road to resolving the tritone conflict leads first by way of B flat. Only in Idomeneus's final monologue, 'Popoli, a voi l'ultima legge impone Idomeneo qual Re' (no.30), do the skies clear in a tonal sense. By the end of this long and magnificent speech E flat has yielded to B flat, the latter being firmly established before the aria 'Torna la pace' (which was also cut). The sinking down a 4th in this case has the solemnity and feeling of release inherent in a plagal cadence, IV-I. Perhaps there is a sense in which the still dangling A major sonority from the first part of the act may be perceived to resolve like a deceptive cadence to B flat, V-VI. The repose on B flat is but a deceptive way station, of course, en route to the only possible final resolution. For if this opera works tonally the way it should, we must feel an overpowering desire at this point for the keynote; it has been made so inevitable, so logical. We should, if possible, hear both the E flat and the A resolving to D, the E flat as an appoggiatura harmony, which it has been often throughout the work, the A as the strongest of all tonal progressions, the perfect cadence, V-I. The tonal span is vast, but I believe we can indeed hear the final tonic as a satisfying resolution to the dominant preparation with which the act began, in which case the temptation returns to place an arrow, a gigantic one this time, upon the diagram, pointing all the way from the beginning to the end of Act 3.

If the penultimate resolution of the tritone conflict to B flat occupied the importance in Mozart's overall planning that I have suggested, he may have been less willing to sacrifice 'Torna la pace' than any of the other music he had to cut in Act 3 because of its too great length. But there is another consideration to be borne in mind here. B flat major constitutes the largest area of tonal contrast within the ballet, the Larghetto in triple time (p.507), which has musical affinities with the 'weiche-emfindsame' style of 'Torna la pace'. If it were choreographed so as to throw attention upon Idamantes and his love for Ilia, it could reinforce the significance that B flat has had throughout the opera. One thing is quite clear from a tonal standpoint: if we do not hear 'Torna la pace' or a substantial part of it, we must hear the ballet *in extenso*, including the Larghetto in B flat. These options are

directly related to each other, because it was the ballet, as well as the length of the text, that made Act 3 too long and led to the cutting of 'Torna la pace'.

The subject of motivic relationships and their bearing on the tonal structure of *Idomeneo* is a vast one. There are several thematic motifs that recur in the opera, but here I shall confine my remarks to the main one, heard at the beginning of the overture as a falling 4th, then falling 5th, with the last note repeated (ex.1a, b). In the course of the

Ex. 1





there is an example which may be motivic, as she rages against Idamantes (p.75, bb.61–2: ex.3a). If we accept this usage as motivic, we must also include the powerful orchestral unison passages in the chorus ‘Corriamo, fuggiamo’, no.18 (p.337, bb.7–8: ex.3b). It is just possible here that one transformation of the motif suggested another to Mozart. The inversion from 10ths to 6ths in no.6 (p.98–9, bb.27–31) provides a further case in point; Mozart remembered this transfer of voices when he later came to write the Gavotte in G (no.8a, p.130, bb.4–6). Most if not all transformations of the motif can be brought into relationship with Idamantes.

A final pair of examples may serve to sum up the significance of the main motif. In the original love duet (no.20a) Mozart quoted the motif just after Ilia and Idamantes agree to become man and wife

(p.370, b.17), upon which the lovers then say ‘lo dica Amor’, as if they heard the motif and recognized its significance. It surely enhances the enjoyment of the opera if this quotation is recognized for what it is, by all listeners and spectators. Recognition that it is verily the Eb–A tritone guise of the motif, being quoted in an enharmonic transformation, as A–D#, imparts a still deeper level of meaning for the musically initiated. In the Viennese replacement for the love duet, no.20b, Mozart quotes the motif in inversion against itself, which he had often done in the course of the opera. It comes during Ilia’s words ‘ma il cor tacendo ancora potrà spiegarlo appien’, roughly ‘the heart remaining silent still, can scarcely explain it’ (p.377, bb.7–8). What can scarcely be explained in words—that is, love—can be expressed in only one way: symbolically, through the emotive power of music to go beyond the limits of verbal expression.

Paper read during the Tagung des Zentralinstitutes für Mozartforschung devoted to ‘Idomeneo’ in August 1973 at the Mozarteum, Salzburg, and printed here by kind permission of the editors of the Mozart-Jahrbuch 1973.

A new production of ‘Idomeneo’ opens at Glyndebourne on May 24: the text of the opera is discussed on p.397 and the recent Oxford production is reviewed on p.411.

John Field’s life and music

Nicholas Temperley

The arrival of Mr Piggott’s book is an important event.* John Field was the only British¹ composer of international weight in a period of two centuries or more; but no full-length study of his life and works in English has yet appeared in print. Patrick Piggott’s biography has been expected for many years—it was ‘eagerly awaited’ by Cecil Hopkinson as long ago as 1961. The knowledge that it was pending has to a certain extent discouraged others from venturing into the same terrain. Meanwhile Mr Piggott, by his highly successful performances and by his paper on the nocturnes at the Royal Musical Association in 1969, has established his position as an authority on the music of Field. Now, at last, his book is before us.

A solid foundation for biographical research on Field was laid by Heinrich Dessauer in his monograph of 1912;² much valuable new information was added by Alexander Nikolayev in 1960,³ while Cecil Hopkinson’s thematic catalogue⁴ provides a more detailed listing of the printed editions of Field’s music than many greater composers can boast. Piggott has built on these foundations, and has also visited Russia to carry out his own investigations. He has dipped into the large number of unsigned newspaper articles and gossip memoirs of

Field produced in the 19th century, and has tackled Grattan Flood’s romantic essay of more recent times.⁵ On the whole he has treated these sources with suitable caution.

And yet his account of Field’s life is less reliable than either Dessauer’s or Nikolayev’s, simply because he has been too secretive about his sources. When he makes a statement about Field one rarely has any idea what it is based on, and therefore one does not know how much weight to attach to it. A bibliography at the end lists a large number of sources, but only a few footnotes refer to them. Piggott devotes a good deal of space to the debunking of legends, but he does not seem to appreciate that these legends generally began with a printed statement quoting no source. He may have started or perpetuated a number of legends by doing the same.

A good case in point is the story of Field’s sojourn in Bath during his boyhood. According to Piggott’s account, Robert Field, John’s father, left Dublin with his family and settled in Bath in the summer of 1793. ‘As the packet bearing him to Bristol sailed out of Dublin harbour, little John Field must have looked back for a long time at the receding shores of Ireland’. (That’s as may be, but how do we know he was on a packet to *Bristol*?) The Fields remained in Bath for ‘only a few months’ and left ‘before the winter season’ when Robert took up a post as a violinist at the Haymarket Theatre, London (where does this timetable come from?). Piggott speculates wildly that the decision

**The Life and Music of John Field (1782–1837), Creator of the Nocturne* by Patrick Piggott, Faber, £10

¹Field was, of course, Irish, like millions of other Britons.

²H. Dessauer: *John Field, sein Leben und seine Werke* (Langensalza, 1912)

³A. Nikolayev: *John Field* (Moscow, 1960); available only in Russian

⁴C. Hopkinson: *A Bibliographical Thematic Catalogue of the Works of John Field* (London, 1961)

⁵W. H. G. Flood: *John Field: Inventor of the Nocturne* (Dublin, 1920)