

WILLIAM TOUTANT, *FUNCTIONAL HARMONY*
(Wadsworth, 1985)

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The publication of yet another harmony text reflects this very active period for the music theory teaching profession. While the study of harmony usually constitutes the nucleus of courses in introductory music theory, the mastery of harmony involves the development of many skills: the ability to spell and identify chords and to recognize them in the context of various textures; an understanding of the interaction of harmony and counterpoint; the contribution of harmony to extended tonal structures; and the important skills of keyboard fluency and aural perception.

The two volumes of William Toutant's *Functional Harmony* address some, but not all, of these pedagogical issues. Volume One covers partwriting of triads in all positions, cadences, the dominant and supertonic seventh chords, nonharmonic tones, harmonic function, harmonization in chorale and instrumental styles, and tonal melody. Four appendices at the end of Volume One comprise a succinct review of fundamentals, figured bass, music notation, and instrumental transposition. Volume Two consists of two chapters on diatonic seventh chords and chapters on chromatic nonharmonic tones and borrowed chords (modal borrowing from parallel keys), secondary dominants, modulation to closely related keys, harmonic sequence, the Neapolitan chord, augmented-sixth chords, altered dominants and further uses of the diminished-seventh chords, extended tertian chords, modulation to distant keys, and a final chapter that considers the dissolution of functional harmony. In both volumes there is an abundance of music examples taken from a variety of textures, programmed exercises interspersing the main body of the text, nonprogrammed exercises, and the more creative listening/literature and composition assignments. In the aural exercises that follow each chapter Toutant confronts an area more often relegated to a separate text. Toutant omits discussion of twentieth-century techniques; his view, quite justifiable, is that twentieth-century materials warrant a separate text. Toutant does not adopt a historical/stylistic organization, but he does interject occasional references to the historical context of harmonic materials under discussion. Besides harmony, therefore, melody and texture (and to a lesser extent, timbre) receive

the most detailed treatment, and even these topics are developed chiefly according to their impact on harmony.

Toutant states one important premise behind *Functional Harmony*: "The combination of programmed material, technical drill, and examples for analysis precludes the need for a supplementary workbook and for an anthology" (Vol. I, p. xii). This self-containment is a strong selling point for this text. (Additionally, the wire binding makes the volumes easy to lay open on a keyboard for playing music examples, and their small size facilitates transport by students.) The degree that *Functional Harmony* is really self-contained depends on the nature of each curriculum. For instance, there are numerous music excerpts for analysis in both the programmed and nonprogrammed exercises, and these include close to thirty-five pages of orchestral and chamber music scores. Thus, there is more than enough music to alleviate the need for an anthology unless a class syllabus calls for the study of form. Toutant has no chapter on form, except in regard to period structure (where he, curiously enough, omits any mention of the double period). It would seem that Toutant could have easily included an appendix on at least small forms at the end of Volume Two, since that volume is almost eighty pages shorter than Volume One and contains no appendices. Otherwise, the instructor is forced to use a separate anthology.

Toutant says of his aural exercises: "While not intended to teach ear-training, these exercises help students integrate aural and written concepts of tonal harmony" (Vol. I, p. xii). The exercises are mostly in the form of suggestions and drills dealing with the harmonic vocabulary discussed in each chapter. Toutant directs the instructor and the student how to reuse the music examples and programmed exercises for ear-training so they can function as keyed dictation material. In many of the aural exercises Toutant suggests that student drill partners work together; in others he designates harmonic pattern drills for students to sing or proposes keyboard activities. The exercises are flexible: the instructor does the choosing and may augment them with his or her own material or use another dictation text along with them. A major problem is that one must be wary about the pacing of the material. Written and aural skills seldom progress at the same rate. Instructors must also clearly delineate testing expectations to students. Students cannot always be expected to be self-motivated to work on ear training. The aural exercises lack dictation material for melodies, rhythms, and contrapuntal textures. In addition, it is apparent that Toutant does not intend to preempt the use of a separate sightsinging text.

A separate fundamentals text might also be necessary. The appendix on fundamentals provides a good review, but more is needed if students' backgrounds are weak. The first two chapters of Volume One, however,

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embody a thorough explanation of triads. *Functional Harmony*, therefore, is not self-contained in the context of all curricula (which no textbook presently on the market can claim to be), but Toutant performs an admirable job of integrating many facets of music theory study into his two volumes.

The most evident influences on Toutant's text are those of Paul Harder and Walter Piston.¹ Considering first Harder's influence, one of the most striking features of *Functional Harmony* is the inclusion of programmed exercises. While Harder uses an entirely programmed format in his text, Toutant's text is only partially programmed. Toutant discusses topics in a prose format and follows each section with a number of programmed frames for students to work through on their own if needed. These can serve other purposes: they may be discussed in class or excerpted for quiz or test material. (The publisher has graciously given adopters of this text permission to photocopy examples for this purpose.) There is a wide range of exercises: questions and answers reviewing main ideas or definitions of terms, harmonic analysis and nonharmonic-tone identification in a variety of music excerpts and textures, melodic analysis, chord spelling, and partwriting. These exercises actively involve the students in the text itself. The text is also, for that reason, appropriate for self-learning situations without any instructor.

The value of a programmed format is such that two recent texts have incorporated exercises that are keyed in the appendices.² In Harder's and Toutant's exercises, however, there is no need to flip to the back of the book for the answers; students need only cover one side of the page. Toutant also avoids some of the drawbacks inherent in a fully programmed format (e.g., the appearance of the textual matter on the page). It is more difficult to scan for important points when all textual matter is divided into programmed frames. Being locked into an entirely programmed format also limits one's flexibility. Some students do not require so much drilling but only need to study main points. With Toutant's partial programming an instructor can stress important concepts and music examples in the prose sections and allow those students who need more reinforcement to complete the programmed material. Students can also more readily review the text later in their scholastic career.

Still, there is a deeper problem with programmed exercises, and this applies to some degree to all texts that make use of them. A steady programmed diet can condition students into believing that music analysis consists merely of pat answers or only one way of looking at things. In many cases, there are multiple ways of viewing a musical passage. We musicians must beware of becoming shackled by musical dogmas that prevent us from seeing the validity of other points of view. The avoidance of this pitfall must begin in the classroom. An instructor should be prepared to balance

axiomatic learning with a more imaginative quest for understanding that will encourage students to increase their musical perspective and retain a desire to continue to do so when they leave the classroom. I should, of course, qualify these statements by saying that not all programmed exercises pose this problem; many of them are specific enough that there is indeed only one correct answer, and in other instances a number of possibilities are allowed.

Toutant's organization of chord vocabulary owes something to Harder, and like Harder, he uses lower-case Roman numerals and other appropriate symbols to help indicate specific chord qualities. He follows McHose, Harder, and others in classifying nonharmonic tones according to "approach-departure," although he does mention the alternative method based on rhythmic placement that Piston uses. Toutant adopts certain concepts from Piston, such as the doubling of tonal degrees in first-inversion triads. Much of Toutant's approach to partwriting is similar to Piston's, including copious examples showing the resolutions of chords. Toutant's text, however, is less convoluted with peripheral ruminations than DeVoto's expansion of Piston's volume (not to disparage that marvelous harmony book). Toutant makes no mention of direct (hidden) fifths or octaves, intending that his guidelines will automatically exclude these perilous phenomena. Toutant identifies the leading-tone seventh chord as vii^{o}_7 or vii^{o}_7 instead of V^{o}_9 , but he follows Piston (and Harder) in classifying non-dominant (embellishing) diminished-seventh chords as supertonic and submediant chords with raised root and third. Toutant does not divide secondary dominants and secondary leading-tone chords into separate chapters or sections, instead discussing them together (Vol. II, Ch. 4). These two groups of chords, while similar in function, might be less confusing to students if presented separately.

Toutant, like Harder, operates under a methodology I will term a *category* approach. This pedagogical viewpoint first entails introducing the partwriting of all root-position triads. Toutant then follows with all the first-inversion triads, the four basic types of six-four chords, the dominant-seventh chord in all positions (with an introduction to the supertonic seventh), other diatonic-seventh chords, and the chromatic-chord vocabulary, all in their respective categories. A different strategy taken by some recent texts is the *pattern* approach. This consists of introducing harmonic patterns together with their functional/contrapuntal meanings, gradually increasing in scope as expansions from the tonic triad.³ (By contrast, Piston and DeVoto use a combination of the two approaches, encompassing patterns or formulae within each chord-position category.)

In a pure category approach, triads are presented in terms of chordal structure and connections; harmonic function and harmonization are post-

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poned until later. In a pattern approach, voice leading and harmonic function are treated together. One difficulty with delaying the topic of chord selection until later is that students can be overwhelmed when they have so many chords from which to choose all at once. It certainly helps that Toutant defines harmonic movements as either *progressive* or *retrogressive*; students can be told to use primarily progressive movements to avoid sinking in a morass of chords, or they may be instructed to tie chord selections to the circle-of-fifths progression. Nevertheless, I do not think that students really come to understand harmonic function until they begin to comprehend chords as they coalesce into patterns, much in the same way that letters group into words—or, better yet, words into phrases. (Concurrent keyboard work is valuable in reinforcing this.) Instructors can perhaps avoid the hazards of a category ordering by emphasizing harmonic function long before melody harmonization is formally presented and devising simple harmonization exercises along the way in conjunction with each new voice-leading problem.

In Toutant's defense, I must admit he does occasionally refer to harmonic function prior to the chapter on harmonization, especially in regard to cadences (Vol. I, Ch. 7), second-inversion triads (Ch. 8), and the dominant-seventh chord (Ch. 9). The summary of typical uses of diatonic functions (Vol. I, pp. 327-29) is particularly practicable. An instructor might use this as a springboard for introducing harmonic patterns at this point in the text, or might examine programmed exercises earlier in the text carefully with reference to the summary. Toutant gracefully details melody harmonization with great clarity and an edifying assemblage of illustrations. He discusses chorale instrumentation first (Vol. I, Ch. 11) and instrumental harmonization two chapters later. This enables students to observe the application of voice-leading tendencies in instrumental textures. Far too often, voice leading goes out the window in students' compositional work in these textures!

Toutant, for that matter, manages the important topic of instrumental textures very effectively, first introducing it early in Volume One (Ch. 5), where he also makes first mention of passing and neighboring tones. I would suggest that instructors and students make harmonic reductions of some of the instrumental textures to demonstrate voice leading and to impart insights for composition in instrumental styles and perhaps later study in Schenkerian analysis. Toutant calls for this in a few simple exercises and frequently suggests creating instrumental textures from harmonic outlines in his composition exercises.

Although *Functional Harmony* is not a counterpoint text, one should keep in mind that counterpoint should actually be taught in every introduc-

tory music theory course, even where harmony is the primary focus. A good rule of thumb is: when teaching harmony, teach counterpoint; when teaching counterpoint, teach harmony. Toutant shows much sensitivity to voice leading and an astute instructor has ample opportunities to emphasize the importance of the contrapuntal tendencies of chords. Toutant does not list the consonant and dissonant intervals, but he does make periodic reference to them and to scale-degree tendencies in discussing chord resolutions. For instance, Toutant notes the dissonant nature of the cadential six-four chord and the contrapuntal origin and resolution propensity inherent in the dominant-seventh chord. His chapter on nonharmonic tones is extremely lucid and the section on suspensions is admirably complete, with an excellent selection of music examples. There is a multitude of Bach chorale excerpts throughout the text, and the fifteen chorale passages on pages 341-46 of Volume One not only provide useful models for chorale harmonization, but also afford the opportunity to observe where chord doublings arise more from Bach's consideration of voice leading or concern for chord sonority.

Functional Harmony, nevertheless, does not stress voice leading on larger levels, although many of the music examples would allow an instructor to do this. The text, instead, takes a more traditional approach, with voice leading more a matter of consecutive chord connections. Toutant uses the term *functional harmony* in one sense, to mean viewing every vertical alignment of notes, exclusive of nonharmonic tones, as a chord bearing a specific scale-degree symbol based on root inversion (Vol I, pp. 16; 29-30). In a broader sense, Toutant also means the harmonic language of the common-practice period, and by implication, *functional* is used to describe how chords act.

Two ways of perceiving how harmony works can be distinguished. One way ("inside looking out") starts from individual lines and discerns how chords are generated from those lines as they form consonant and dissonant intervals (particularly with the bass) and move toward harmonic goals. The other way ("outside looking in"), which Toutant follows, begins with the identification of each vertical sonority and observes how chords are connected through voice-leading proclivities. This, no doubt, opens up a virtual Pandora's Box of arguments for and against Toutant's orientation, but either approach should work as long as both the harmonic and contrapuntal aspects are adequately explained. More important is that the labeling of a certain chord is absolutely secondary to explaining *what it does*. Whether one calls a cadential six-four a $V_6/4-5/3$ or, as Toutant does, a $I_6/4$, while explaining its contrapuntal nature and metrical placement, should we say that one label is all right and the other all wrong? Both views are to be commended for their consistency. (Toutant, in fact, states that the

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cadential six-four is a "tonic chord that is dominant in function" Vol. I, p. 208). The danger comes not so much in claiming that a chord has a certain vertical formation, but rather in failing to describe accurately how the chord syntactically operates in the context of an entire passage. One must beware that the mere labeling of Roman numerals falls short in describing the contrapuntal/functional nature of harmony.

I do not think that Toutant is guilty of some harmonic sin because he has adhered throughout to the principle of root inversion; I believe in harmonic toleration. Toutant seems to be aware of the limitations of Roman numerals, and he is careful to provide plentiful illustrations and thorough explanations of how chords appear in context. Still, the contrapuntal aspect could be strengthened even more in Toutant's text to balance his orientation to root inversion. This can be observed in the example of consecutive first-inversion triads (Vol. I, p. 156, Ex. 6.12). I would not say that assigning each chord a Roman numeral is an unforgivable error; the mistake would be in failing to explain fully the contrapuntal (rather than functional) nature of these six-three chords. Toutant only hints at this with the statement: "Observe how Mozart creates a very melodic bass line consisting of step-wise movement, until the last two chords" (p. 155). Another relevant example is the chapter on "Harmonic Sequence" (Vol. II, Ch. 6). There, harmonic sequences are explained according to root movement, which is certainly plausible and logical. Toutant could improve his presentation by showing skeletons of linear movements. For instance, an explanation of the sequential harmonic root pattern in the excerpt from Bach's Gavotte from French Suite No. 5 (Vol. II, p. 172, Ex. 6.12) could be amplified by demonstrating how it exemplifies descending 5-6 technique. This would provide the contrapuntal justification for what Bach is doing.

Related to the foregoing points is the matter of figured bass. Toutant briefly introduces the concept in the chapter on first inversion and summarizes it in a three-page appendix that contains one lengthy realization and three brief exercises. Toutant omits figured bass from the main body of his text and exercises, perhaps in the interests of simplicity and directness. I believe, however, that figured bass should be incorporated into the exercises and a little more in the text since this better explains the voice leading and maintains a historical link with those composers who thought in terms of figured bass. Toutant would further increase the appeal of his text were he, at least, to attach an appendix to each volume containing figured-bass exercises. Yet, it should be no great problem for instructors to devise their own or recast some of Toutant's exercises as figured-bass lines. Again, any shortfalls in Toutant's discussion of voice leading can be remedied by thoughtful instruction, capitalizing on the profusion of valuable music examples.

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Among the most interesting activities suggested in *Functional Harmony* are the Listening/Literature Assignments. These are designed to give students greater familiarity with music literature and to apply what they are learning to what they see and hear. Using them in classroom presentations or including them on homework assignments would give the study of harmony a gratifying change of pace and help create in students the spirit of romance that should characterize introductory levels of college music study.

I recommend that instructors using *Functional Harmony* obtain an Instructor's Manual from the publisher. Toutant gives many helpful suggestions for utilizing the assignments and exercises in each chapter. It is obvious that Toutant draws his ideas from much practical experience teaching music theory.

If I have tarried on some of the implications of Toutant's pedagogical stance, I do not mean to detract from the high quality of his text. Toutant's prose is clear and direct without needlessly sacrificing the completeness of his explanations or adopting an oversimplified writing style. His intention is to stir up students' interest and love for music literature and active involvement in musical activities and I feel that his text is very successful in accomplishing these aims. Over the long term, however, it is the instructor, more than the textbook, that should lead to high quality music theory instruction. Used by an effective instructor, *Functional Harmony* can give students the preparation they need to spend the rest of their lives really coming to understand the nature of our multifarious art, while reaping rewards through a lifetime of both listening to and making music.

NOTES

¹Paul O. Harder, *Harmonic Materials in Tonal Music: A Programmed Course*, fifth edition, 2 vols. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1984), and Walter Piston, *Harmony*, fifth ed., rev. and enl. by Mark DeVoto (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987).

²Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, *Tonal Harmony, With an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1894); and Allen Winold, *Harmony: Patterns and Principles*, 2 vols., *Workbook*, 2 vols. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986).

³The most recent example is Allen Winold's *Harmony: Patterns and Principles*. A pattern approach is laid out in a more Schenkerian orientation by Edward Aldwell's and Carl Schachter's *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978 and 1979). Another text adaptable to this approach is Thomas Benjamin, et al., *Techniques and Materials of Tonal Music, with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Techniques*, third edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1986).