

Deceiving the Ear: Recontextualization, Key Association, and Auxiliary Cadence in Two Songs by Hugo Wolf

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The more *outré* and grotesque an incident is the more carefully it deserves to be examined, and the very point which appears to complicate a case is, when duly considered and scientifically handled, the one which is most likely to elucidate it.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (2003, 692)

The late nineteenth century was an important transitional period in Western classical music as composers created increasingly chromatic and dissonant works, moving toward an aesthetic that projected multiple perceived tonal centers and stretched the bounds of tonality. In recent years, theorists have contended that such pieces can often contain two tonics in a “directionally tonal” relationship, wherein the piece begins in one key and finishes in another. According to Deborah Stein, “The concept of directional tonality is particularly useful in depicting a lack of correspondence between the openings and closings of pieces.”¹ Two such compositions are Hugo Wolf’s *An den Schlaf*, in which the key signature changes from four flats to four sharps midway through the piece, and *Lebe wohl*, which begins in G \flat major and ends in D \flat major.² These seemingly abrupt shifts could lend themselves to directionally tonal interpretations, as Stein does in her analysis, stating that *An den Schlaf* “begins and ends in two different keys (each of which has its own network of harmonic relations), and these two networks remain distinct from one another at the song’s conclusion.”³ However, the underlying limitation of this view is the assumed “lack of correspondence,” which diminishes the structural importance of the transition between the two perceived tonalities and their fundamental relationship. Mark Anson-Cartwright states that “if a piece begins and ends in different keys, then the harmonic-contrapuntal structure may be based, from a Schenkerian standpoint, on some other model than the *Ursatz*, such as an auxiliary cadence.” Furthermore, he says, “pieces based on these models differ from those based on an *Ursatz* in that they present the structural tonic as a goal, but not as a point of departure” (2001, 234).

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1 Stein (1985, 145). Other theorists have used similar approaches, such as Bailey (1985), Kinderman (1988), Kinderman and Krebs (1996), Krebs (1981 and 1991), Loeb (1990), Nelson (1992), and Rothstein (2008). Alternately, Schachter (1999) analyzes Chopin’s *Fantasy*, op. 49, as a monotonal structure. See also n. 23 in Jackson (1991).

2 Previous analyses of *An den Schlaf* include Everett (2004, 56–58); Harrison (1994, 138–153); and Stein (1985, 187–214).

3 Stein (1985, 203). See also pp. 168–180 for her directionally tonal interpretation of *Lebe wohl*.

Instead of adopting the interpretation of directional tonality, I would first like to analyze each song progressively. By taking this approach, I will demonstrate how the initial tonal center is recontextualized to assume different harmonic functions while also uncovering motivic connections that unite the opening and closing tonal centers. I will then propose that these opening and closing tonal centers are intrinsically connected in a monotonal framework by retrospectively viewing the structure of each piece as a large-scale auxiliary cadence. Finally, by incorporating the symbolic meanings of traditional key associations, a harmonic narrative that parallels the text will be revealed, thus creating new understandings of Mörike's poems.

AN DEN SCHLAF

As can be seen in Example 1, *An den Schlaf* begins in $A\flat$, and considering the *Kopftön* C in the top voice, this opening $A\flat$ harmony is perceived as the tonic. The bass oscillates between $A\flat$ and $D\flat$ until m. 3, when $A\flat$ moves to $C\flat$, the chromatic mediant. A chromatic voice exchange between the bass and tenor voices of the piano places $G\flat$ in the bass as a lower neighbor to $A\flat$, shown just below the graph, which builds tension to the return of $A\flat$ in m. 5 with the entry of the voice. Example 2 shows that the motion to the chromatic mediant in the piano introduction is paralleled by the bass motion to $B\flat$ in m. 9 (here, enharmonically spelled), and again moves back to $A\flat$ in m. 12. Through these harmonic motions, $A\flat$ is firmly planted in the listener's ear and continues to be understood as the tonic through the first twelve measures.

Following the motion to B, the bass returns to $A\flat$ in m. 12, but then moves immediately to $D\flat$ in m. 13. This arrival on $D\flat$ raises two possible interpretations of the structure thus far, both of which are depicted in Example 3. The first possibility, shown in Example 3a, is to interpret $D\flat$ as the subdominant of $A\flat$. This motion to IV of $A\flat$ in m. 13 could be an enlargement of the oscillation between $A\flat$ and $D\flat$ in the opening measures, which would prolong the $A\flat$ tonic. Alternately, the other possibility is to interpret $A\flat$ as the dominant of $D\flat$, shown in Example 3b. Supporting this idea is Example 4, which illustrates that when the bass moves from $B\flat$ to $A\flat$, this $A\flat$ does not have the same function as the opening $A\flat$. The fifth

Example 1. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, mm. 1–5

Example 2. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, Progressive View, mm. 1–12

1 5 9 12

$\hat{3}$

Ab: I =bIII I

Example 3. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, Progressive View, mm. 1–16

a. 1 5 7 9 12 13 16

$\hat{3}$

Ab: I IV I

b. 1 7 9 12 13 16

$\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$

Db: V I V

Example 4. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, mm. 11–13

of the B minor chord, F \sharp , is sustained above the bass descent and becomes G \flat , the seventh of A \flat . The bass line B \flat –A \flat –A \flat recontextualizes A \flat , transforming what was the initial tonic into V 7 of D \flat . Returning to Example 3b with D \flat as the newly understood tonic, the following A \flat in m. 16 functions as a structural dominant rather than as a return to the tonic.

If we then look to Example 5b first, continuing to view D \flat as the tonic becomes problematic from m. 18 forward. Whereas a return to D \flat would be expected following the dominant in m. 16, Wolf makes no such resolution. Neither A \flat nor D \flat is presented in m. 18, but B \sharp , which would be \sharp VI or \flat VII of D \flat . The A \flat in m. 16 could perhaps be connected with the G \sharp in m. 20, but the harmony here is a first inversion E major triad, not G \sharp major, which would be the enharmonic equivalent of A \flat major. If A \flat is prolonged to the G \sharp , a 5–6 exchange from E \flat to E \sharp would have to be understood above the bass to accommodate the change of harmony. This chord then moves to E \sharp as \sharp II, or \flat III, in m. 21. In the end, though, the piece would finish on \sharp II/ \flat III with \sharp 2 in the *Urlinie*, resulting in a faulty analytical understanding of the piece.

If we alternately proceed with the progressive view that holds A \flat as the tonic, shown in Example 5a, we encounter similar difficulties. The B \sharp in m. 18 could function as the chromatic mediant, similar to m. 9, and the A \flat would be picked up in m. 20, enharmonically spelled as G \sharp . Assuming a 5–6 exchange over A \flat and G \sharp again would connect the two harmonies, but nowhere in the remainder of the piece is there a definitive return to A \flat major, or for that matter, G \sharp major. The resultant structure would be chromatically deformed and entirely unresolved if one were to continue to view A \flat as the tonic.

While the progressive analyses in Example 5 prove to be problematic, the connection drawn between A \flat in m. 16 and G \sharp in m. 20 is not entirely without avail. Example 6 shows that in the measure preceding G \sharp , the same motive from Example 4 is found in the bass, this time spelled B \flat –A \flat –G \sharp . Although the harmonies built on A \flat and G \sharp are different, the enharmonic connection demonstrates another instance of recontextualization following this motive. The initial A \flat becomes G \sharp and is recontextualized not as a tonic, nor as a dominant, but unfolds as the upper third of E major, the concluding tonic. This process of recontextualization through this motive therefore effectively connects the perceived A \flat tonic of the beginning with the concluding E major tonic.

Example 5. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, Progressive View, mm. 1–28

a. 1 5 7 9 12 13 16 18 19 20 21 26 27

13 16 18 19 20 21 26 27

$\hat{3}$ $\hat{\#2?}$ $\hat{\#1?}$

[5-] [6]

A♭: I (♭III I) IV I (=♭III) #V? =>III

b. 1 7 9 12 13 16 18 19 20 21 26 28

13 16 18 19 20 21 26 28

$\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $=\hat{2}$ $=\hat{\#2/\flat 3}$

[5-] [6]

D♭: V I V (#VI/♭VII) #II/♭III #VI/♭VII #II/♭III

Example 6. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, mm. 19–21

19 20 21

$\hat{3}$

E: V (♯) I

In addition to the aforementioned bass motive, there is a second motive that proves to be significant in transitioning between the opening and closing tonal centers. Example 7 shows a chromatic upper neighbor figure on $E\flat$ that first appears in the alto voice of the piano introduction, indicated with a bracket. As $E\flat$ is a consonant chord tone of the $A\flat$ harmony and the $F\flat$ functions as a semitone neighbor, $E\flat$ here is heard as the main note and $F\flat$ is subsidiary. The voice enters in m. 5 on C but moves up to $E\flat$ through $F\flat$ as an appoggiatura in the following measure. This registral shift of the motive further emphasizes $E\flat$ as the primary tone. At the same time, the piano presents a second semitone motive with $D\flat$ as an upper neighbor to C. This second semitone motive appears again in m. 12 (Example 8), though here C functions as a leading tone to $D\flat$ above the bass motive that recontextualized $A\flat$ from its tonic status to dominant. In m. 16, the motive appears for the third time as a 4–3 suspension over $A\flat$, turning $D\flat$ back into a subsidiary neighbor note to C.

The first semitone motive returns at the beginning of the second stanza in m. 18 (Example 9), although this time enharmonically spelled as $D\sharp$ and $E\natural$. As part of the B major harmony, $D\sharp$ is the primary tone with $E\natural$ as an upper neighbor, just as in the beginning of the piece. In the second measure of this example, the bass moves from $B\sharp$ to $A\sharp$, over which the $D\sharp$ is sustained. Here, though, $D\sharp$ becomes a leading tone resolving to $E\sharp$, both locally above $G\sharp$ in m. 20 and in a deeper sense, to the arrival of

Example 7. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, mm. 1–8

Example 8. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, mm. 11–17

the E tonic in m. 21. The very same bass motive that transformed the function of A \flat has simultaneously recontextualized the E \flat in m. 1 from its initial status as the fifth of A \flat major to the leading tone of E \natural in m. 19 (Example 10). Whereas F \flat was initially subsidiary to E \flat , the roles have been reversed: D \sharp has become an ancillary leading tone to the E major tonality. In the final measures, which are shown in Example 11, the two semitone motives are presented successively. C \sharp moves to C \natural , then D \sharp emphatically resolves to E \natural three times in the highest register thus far presented, reaffirming the functional transformation. This

Example 9. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, mm. 18–21

Example 10. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, Transformation of Functional Roles of the Semitone Motives

Example 11. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*, mm. 26–34

role reversal and ultimate fusion of the two semitone motives is the motivic force that achieves the shift from $A\flat$ major to E major.

In light of these motivic transformations and the recontextualization of the initial harmony, the opening and closing tonal centers are no longer viewed as “irreconcilable” (Stein 1985, 212). Instead of viewing the piece as directionally tonal, we can now understand that the initial $A\flat$ harmony is a deceptive beginning as part of a large-scale auxiliary cadence. Poundie Burstein describes the deceptive beginning as “start[ing] both with a non-tonic chord and in a non-tonic key,” and states that “only retrospectively is the apparent opening key understood as a tonicization of a lower-level *Stufe*” (2005, 178). Therefore, the initial $A\flat$ harmony can be interpreted retrospectively as the enharmonic III of E. In Example 12a, the opening $A\flat$ moves to $D\flat$ in m. 13 and then to the dominant of $D\flat$ in m. 16, which is left unresolved. This unresolved dominant in a sense picks up and prolongs the initial harmony, which on a deeper level moves to $B\sharp$ in m. 18. This $B\sharp$ functions as the dominant of E, creating a III–V–I auxiliary cadence that resolves to E major in m. 21.

Not only are the opening and closing tonal centers related through an auxiliary cadence, but a large-scale voice exchange connects the opening $A\flat$ with the concluding E tonic, shown in Example 12b. The emphasis on C in the first measures of the piece establishes the pitch as $\hat{3}$ of $A\flat$, the *Kopftön* of a potential *Urlinie*, and then $E\flat$ is emphasized by the voice in m. 7. While $E\flat$ does not necessarily replace C as the *Kopftön* of $A\flat$, it proves to be a contrapuntally significant pitch. The $E\flat$ descends through $D\sharp$ to C, providing linear motion above the intervening chromatic mediant. Additionally, the $E\flat$ moves in a deeper sense to F in m. 13, which is $\hat{3}$ of $D\flat$, thus creating smooth voice leading to the perceived $D\flat$ tonality. However, most importantly, this graph shows that the $E\flat$ above $A\flat$ in m. 7 is part of a chromatic voice exchange with the concluding tonic. The $E\flat$ in the top voice becomes $E\sharp$ in the bass in m. 21, while the opening $A\flat$ bass note becomes $\hat{3}$ of E, enharmonically spelled as $G\sharp$, and initiates the *Urlinie* in the definitive tonic key of E. By recognizing this voice exchange in tandem with the large-scale auxiliary cadence, the connection between $A\flat$ major and E major is supported once again.

Just as with many of Wolf’s complex harmonies, Mörike’s poem (Figure 1) presents many ambiguities concerning its meaning. *An den Schlaf* centers on the dichotomy between life and death, yet the narrator’s situation is unclear. He yearns for sleep, but is this appeal for the literal sense of the word or is it a metaphor for death? In his interpretation of *An den Schlaf*, Eric Sams suggests that “the

Example 12. Hugo Wolf, *An den Schlaf*

a. 1 5 7 9 13 16 18 20 21 26 28 32

D \flat : $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$

A \flat : I
E: =III

D \flat : V I V
IV I (6-5) V (\sharp) I V $\frac{4}{3}$ I

b. 1 5 7 9 13 16 18 20 21 26 28 32

D \flat : $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$

E: =III

D \flat : V I V
V I V I

Figure 1. Heinrich Mörike, “An den Schlaf”

Schlaf! süsser Schlaf!
Obwohl dem Tod wie du
nichts gleicht,
Auf diesem Lager doch
willkommen heiß' ich dich!

Denn ohne Leben so,
Wie lieblich lebt es sich!
So weit vom Sterben,
Ach, wie stirbt es sich so leicht!

Sleep! sweet sleep!
Though next to death there is nothing
that so much resembles you,
Into this bed I proclaim you welcome!

For without life so,
How lovely it is to live!
So far from death,
Oh, how easy it is to die!

second part of the song, beginning at ‘Denn ohne Leben’ (For without life), is announced in a new key, and here the music remains until the slow final relaxation of the piano postlude, without returning to the original tonality—as if sleep had indeed intervened” (1962, 69). However, the harmonic narrative conveyed by traditional key associations creates a different story.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, keys were often associated with various concepts, affects, and moods. The most influential description of key associations was C.F.D. Schubart’s *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, written from 1784 to 1785 and published posthumously in 1806. Despite the centuries-long debate over the existence of innate key characteristics and their validity, it should be no stretch of the imagination to suggest that through history certain keys could have developed affectational connotations—just as the descending tetrachord has become a symbol of lament, or the plagal cadence’s association with the sacred—and that Wolf could have utilized them in his music. Many composers, such as Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann, were familiar with these key associations and incorporated them into their own compositions.⁴ Anton Schindler quotes Beethoven referencing his 1814 opera *Fidelio*:

You say it doesn’t matter whether a song is in F minor, E minor, or G minor; I call that as nonsensical as saying that two times two are five. When I make Pizarro sing in harsh keys (even in G# major) when he makes his heinous accusations of Florestan to the jailer, I do it to convey the nature of this individual, which is fully revealed in his duet with Rocco. These keys give me the best colors with which to express his character.⁵

Schumann also wrote an essay on key characteristics for his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* with which Wolf was likely familiar.⁶ It would be a considerable fallacy to suggest that key characteristics were significant to every composer in every work, but it would be equally misguided to deny altogether the potential significance of key associations, especially within the *Lieder* tradition in which Wolf was undeniably rooted.

Therefore, by combining Schubart’s key associations (Figure 2) with the harmonic progression, Wolf’s setting creates a harmonic narrative that is quite the opposite of Sams’s interpretation. In *An den Schlaf*, the first line of text, “Schlaf! süßer Schlaf!” (Sleep! sweet sleep!) is set in A \flat , suggesting that the protagonist is in fact yearning for death through the metaphor of sleep. With the motion to B minor in m. 9, although not as a tonal center, he is awaiting his fate: this can be none other than “Tod,” or death, as it aligns with the arrival on B. The words “willkommen heiss’ ich dich!” (I proclaim thee welcome!) occur at the arrival of the D \flat tonal center, signifying his resignation and acceptance of imminent death.

4 Ossenkop (2011). See also Reed (1997, 484–494) and Code (1995). Furthermore, Bailey (1977) discusses Wagner’s development and use of associative tonality.

5 Schindler (1996, 369). In addition, he writes, “One of the books in [Beethoven’s] very limited personal library was Schubart’s *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*” (366), and that “Beethoven did not hesitate to declare that before setting a text he would deliberate with himself as to the most suitable key. To deny without reason the special character of the different keys was to Beethoven like denying the effect of the sun and the moon on the ebb and flow of the tides” (369).

6 Schumann (1835, 43–44). Wolf references another article of Schumann’s from the same year in one of his concert reviews, saying, “It may be assumed that Schumann’s famous critique [of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*] is familiar to every music lover” (1979, 130).

Figure 2. Select Key Associations after Schubart (as quoted by Steblin 2002)

D \flat major	Resignation, Solemnity, “A leering key, degenerating into grief and rapture. It cannot laugh, but it can smile; it cannot howl, but it can at least grimace its crying” (234).
E major	“Noisy shouts of joy, laughing pleasure and not yet complete, full delight” (252). ⁷
G \flat major	“Triumph over difficulty, free sigh of relief uttered when hurdles are surmounted; echo of a soul which has fiercely struggled and finally conquered lies in all uses of this key” (266).
A \flat major	“The key of the grave. Death, grave, putrefaction, judgement, eternity lie in its radius” (276).
B minor	“This is as it were the key of patience, of calm awaiting one’s fate and of submission to divine dispensation. For that reason its lament is so mild, without ever breaking out into offensive murmuring or whimpering” (296).

However, just as he is about to succumb, the harmony stops on the dominant of D \flat . Instead of accepting death, as a resolution to D \flat would imply, E \flat is transformed into D \sharp and becomes the leading tone to E \sharp , the key that symbolizes his renewed will to live. The final stanza then serves as a reflection on the motivation that lifted him from the brink of death. Through the recontextualization of the A \flat harmony and the transformation of E \flat into the leading tone of E major, the disconnect between the two tonal centers is metamorphosed into continuity through which the protagonist is able to find new meaning in life.

LEBE WOHL

A similar harmonic discrepancy between the opening and closing tonal centers is presented in Wolf’s setting of *Lebe wohl*. Although there is no change in the key signature as there is in *An den Schlaf*, *Lebe wohl* begins in G \flat major and ends very clearly in D \flat major. In the poem, the protagonist tells of the anguish caused by a lost love who apathetically bid him “farewell” (Figure 3), and Wolf’s choice of keys in which to set the text is very appropriate.⁸ Schubart writes that G \flat portrays “triumph over difficulty, [a] free sigh of relief uttered when hurdles are surmounted; [the] echo of a soul which has fiercely struggled and finally conquered” (Steblin 2002, 266). Similarly, Hugh MacDonald notes the prevalent use of G \flat major in 19th-century opera, such as in *Les Huguenots* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*,

7 Eric McKee notes that “by the beginning of the nineteenth century the keys of E major and A \flat major were popularly conceived as polar opposites. [...] E major was the key of brightness, release from torment, and of things spiritual; A \flat major was the key of darkness, doom, and death” (2005, 133).

8 Choosing G \flat major, a difficult and seldom used key, seems to have been very deliberate. Equal temperament had eliminated the intonational differences between keys, and there were no physical qualities of the piano or the voice to consider that would yield acoustical variances, such as with open or depressed strings. The vocal range does not warrant the choice of key signature either—the song could just as easily have been written in F or G, which would have been much easier to play, and would still contain essentially the same range for the singer. For this reason, the choice of G \flat major was not for the sake of practicality and was plausibly chosen for its connotation.

Figure 3. Heinrich Mörike, “Lebe wohl”

“Lebe wohl!” Du fühlst nicht,
Was es heißt, dies Wort der Schmerzen;
Mit getrostem Angesicht
Sagtest du’s und leichtem Herzen.

“Farewell!” You feel not
What it means, this word of pain;
With a confident face
You spoke it, and with a light heart.

Lebe wohl! Ach tausendmal
Hab’ ich mir es vorgesprochen,
Und in nimmersatter Qual
Mir das Herz damit gebrochen!

Farewell! Oh a thousand times
Have I said it to myself,
And in insatiable pain
I have broken my heart with it!

for its “otherworldly” character and to depict “ecstasy and heavenly bliss, in particular for love duets” (1988, 230). $D\flat$, on the other hand, conveys resignation and the acceptance of one’s sorrowful fate. Indeed, Schumann’s own song *Resignation* (op. 83/1), in which the narrator comes to terms with the agonizing loss of his love, is fittingly written in $D\flat$ major.

Whereas *An den Schlaf* contains a clear shift in tonal centers, *Lebe wohl* presents several features that foreshadow the concluding $D\flat$ tonic early in the piece, despite the fact that the perception of $G\flat$ as the tonic persists for a vast majority of the song. Timothy Jackson identifies two broad categories of auxiliary cadences:

“Monotonic” auxiliary cadences evoke the key of the concluding tonic chord while simultaneously delaying [definitive tonic arrival]; “bitonic” auxiliary cadences, on the other hand, create the impression of two competing tonics whereby the first tonic ultimately gives way to the second. Only retrospectively—i.e. as the composition reaches its conclusion—is the listener able to perceive the first tonic as subsidiary to the second. (2001, 189)

This description of the “bitonic” auxiliary cadence is particularly apt for understanding the large-scale harmonic structure of *Lebe wohl* and the vivid conflict between $G\flat$ and $D\flat$.

With his setting of the text, Wolf depicts a protagonist who in disbelief refuses to accept that his love has gone. This sentiment is reflected in the music as he struggles desperately to maintain the bliss of $G\flat$ major and prevent the inevitable $D\flat$ major. As seen in Example 13, the song opens with a clear $G\flat$ harmony with $\hat{3}$ in the top voice. After a chromatic sighing figure ($B\flat$ – $B\flat$ – $A\flat$), the soprano voice of the piano shifts registers and moves to F, a seventh above $G\flat$ and $\hat{3}$ of $D\flat$.

At the same time, a chromatic descent of the $G\flat$ *Urlinie* in the middleground moves through $b\hat{3}$ ($A\flat$) to $\hat{2}$ above a back-relating dominant in m. 4, but immediately sinks to $b\hat{2}$ coinciding with the word “Schmerzen” (pain). The Phrygian $\hat{2}$ acts as a painful chromatic deformation of the diatonic second scale degree. The $G\flat$ is then picked up in the alto voice of the piano in m. 6 where it functions as a leading tone and as part of a doubly-chromatic voice exchange with the opening harmony to create an augmented sixth resolving to $A\flat$ (Example 14). Conscious of the fact that $A\flat$ is the dominant of $D\flat$, the

Example 13. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, mm. 1–5

G♭: $\hat{3}$
 D♭: $\hat{3}$
 G♭: 1
 D♭: IV⁷
 V¹⁹

Example 14. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, mm. 6–7

D♭: Gr₆ X
 G♭M Gr₆ (Fr₆) G♭M Fm
 m. 1

key which signifies his fate, the protagonist frantically tries to distort the dominant harmony so as to resolve in any way other than as a dominant. The D^{\sharp} in the tenor voice of the piano could be considered a chromatic passing tone en route to C^{\sharp} (the consonant third above A^{\flat}), but by the time C^{\sharp} is reached the soprano voice of the piano has moved to D^{\sharp} , creating a voice exchange that prolongs both pitches. With an implied F^{\sharp} in the top voice, a French augmented sixth chord is built above A^{\flat} that resolves to G^{\sharp} , preventing the A^{\flat} from becoming a dominant seventh chord.⁹

Wolf reaches the dominant of G^{\flat} at the end of the first stanza, shown in Example 15, and the *Uralinie* moves to $\hat{2}$ following the 4–3 suspension. However, $\hat{2}$ is immediately usurped by the upper neighbor $\hat{4}$. This substitution provides continuity by bridging over the interruption in the background and also carries narrative significance. To fend off reality as he did in thwarting the modulation to D^{\flat} , the protagonist uses this stratagem to prevent structural closure, thereby prolonging his blissful illusion, and for the present he succeeds.

Example 15. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, mm. 5–9

⁹ There is no F^{\sharp} present in m. 6, but it may be implied given the context. Both C^{\sharp} and D^{\sharp} are prolonged above A^{\flat} , which resembles a French augmented sixth chord, yet without the augmented sixth. However, the A^{\flat} resolves to a G^{\sharp} octave as it would if it were an augmented sixth. For this reason, F^{\sharp} can be implied above the A^{\flat} , derived enharmonically from the prior G^{\flat} .

The second half of the piece begins in m. 9 with a return to the $G\flat$ tonic and the same sighing figure as in the first measure (Example 16). The bass moves to $B\flat$ in m. 11 over which the F *Kopft*on is picked up and the $B\flat$ unfolds as a dominant seventh of $E\flat$. The voice then moves from F to $E\sharp$ in m. 13 (Example 17), initiating a voice exchange with the top line of the piano. The vocal line ascends from $E\sharp$ to $A\flat$, exclaiming “Qual” (pain) at the climactic moment in the piece, while the piano descends from $A\flat$ to $F\flat$, the chromatically lowered $\hat{3}$. The climax in m. 14 seems to emphasize an arrival on $D\flat$, but the protagonist once again circumvents the $D\flat$ tonic using the downward momentum of the piano line to continue through to $F\flat$. The $F\flat$ is then transferred into the bass through another voice exchange and moves to $F\sharp$, the Neapolitan six chord of the concluding $D\flat$ tonic. The bass then ascends chromatically, reaching the dominant at the moment his heart is broken.¹⁰

Example 16. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, mm. 9–13

Example 17. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, mm. 13–17

¹⁰ “das Herz damit gebrochen!” (mm. 14–16).

Even in the final measures, shown in Example 18, the protagonist tries desperately to prevent the piece from ending. The vocal line moves through $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$ over the dominant in what seems to be the final descent of the *Urlinie*, yet again places $\hat{4}$ on top to avoid structural closure, just as in m. 8 at the end of the first stanza. However, this time the vocal line is left unresolved and never reaches $\hat{1}$, relegating his tragic fate to the piano.¹¹ The piano postlude echoes this motive ($\hat{3}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{4}$) twice more, reiterating his reluctance, until finally in the penultimate measure he is able to resist no longer. Utterly exhausted, he cannot bear even to go through the proper means of resolution as the line falls from $\hat{3}$ directly to $\hat{1}$.

Although $G\flat$ major very convincingly appears to be the tonic for the entire first stanza and well into the second, its structural identity was plagued from the beginning. The prevalent emphasis on F, beginning in the second measure, destabilizes the tonic status of $G\flat$ by adding a seventh. As the song progresses, the $G\flat$ “tonic” is recontextualized as the subdominant of $D\flat$ with F as $\hat{3}$, beginning a $IV^7-II^6-V^7-I$ auxiliary cadence (Example 21). In the end $G\flat$ could never truly function as the tonic, just as the protagonist could not hold on to his lost love, no matter how desperately he tried.

Example 18. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, mm. 16–20

The musical score for Example 18 consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle staff is the piano right hand, and the bottom staff is the piano left hand. The key signature is G-flat major (three flats). The vocal line begins with a melodic fragment: $\hat{3}$ (G-flat), $\hat{2}$ (A-flat), $\hat{4}$ (B-flat). The piano accompaniment features a complex harmonic structure. A dashed line connects the piano accompaniment in measures 16-17 to the vocal line in measure 18, indicating a structural relationship. A legend at the bottom left shows a V chord with notes 8, 7, 5, 3, and a I chord.

11 In several of the *Dichterliebe* songs, Schumann left the vocal line unresolved at its conclusion and achieved structural closure only in the piano postlude, a possible precedent for Wolf. This idea is expanded in *Lebe wohl*: the vocalist never sings in $D\flat$ major, as if the protagonist never truly accepts his fate. Even further, the $G\flat$ key signature is maintained, despite the clear change in key.

Example 19. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, Middleground of First Stanza

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the middleground of the first stanza of Hugo Wolf's *Lebe wohl*. Each system consists of a vocal line (top staff) and a piano accompaniment (bottom staff). The first system is marked with measure numbers 1, 5, and 9. The second system continues the music. Annotations include chord symbols: G: I, D: I, G: I, D: IV⁷, D: I, G: I, D: IV⁷, G: I, D: I, G: I, D: IV⁷, G: I, D: IV⁷, III, V⁷, II₆, V⁷, and I. There are also annotations for melodic intervals: $\hat{2}$, $\hat{2}$, $\hat{4}$, and $\hat{3}$. The piano part features complex textures with overlapping lines and chords, while the vocal line is more melodic. The overall structure is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes and rests.

Example 20. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, Middleground of Second Stanza

9 11 13 15 17 19

G:I: I
D:IV⁷

D:I: I
D:IV⁷

bII₆ I

bII₆ I

D:I: I
D:IV⁷

bII₆ I

Example 21. Hugo Wolf, *Lebe wohl*, Background

The image shows a musical score for Hugo Wolf's *Lebe wohl*. The score is written for piano and features a complex harmonic structure. The key signature is D-flat major (two flats). The score is divided into measures 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, and 17. Above the staff, there are circled numbers: 3̂ above measure 1, b3̂ above measure 9, 2̂ above measure 16, and 1̂ above measure 17. Below the staff, there are chord symbols: D \flat : IV \flat below measure 1, bII \flat below measure 9, V \flat below measure 16, and I below measure 17. The music consists of a treble and bass staff with various notes, rests, and accidentals. A dashed line connects the notes in measure 1 to those in measure 9, and another dashed line connects the notes in measure 9 to those in measure 16, highlighting the tonal relationships.

The *outré* features of these two songs—the complex and dissonant progressions, the disparate tonal centers, the abrupt shift in key signature, the pronounced seventh above G \flat —have complicated theorists’ analytical understanding of these compositions, and many more similar works. Yet, to understand the context of these complexities, their relationship to the background structure, and ultimately their connection to the text, sheds light on their meaning. Interpreting *An den Schlaf* or *Lebe wohl* as directionally tonal is not necessarily incorrect, but it provides only a small part of the picture. Viewing each piece retrospectively as a unified monotonal structure through which the initial harmony is recontextualized to assume new meaning clarifies the function of these complications and demonstrates how the opening and closing tonal centers are intrinsically related. These crucial aspects inform not only the interpretation of the tonal structures, but also the interpretation of the poems themselves, illuminating the harmonic narratives created to complement the texts. Understanding the pieces in this manner contributes to a fuller comprehension and a deeper appreciation of two of Hugo Wolf’s beautifully complex songs.

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