Connexions module: m35089

CADENCES*

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NOTE: Please note that you must have the most recent copy of Macromedia's Flash plugin installed to play the musical examples.

A cadence is a harmonic arrival point. Cadences are the pillars of harmonic structures; They mark a work's harmonic destinations.

In the Chorale settings of J.S. Bach, the **rhythm** pauses at each **cadence**.

Example 1

This media object is an audio file. Please view or download it at http://cnx.org/content/m35089/1.1/Bach22>

In other music, cadences punctuate the end of phrases.

Example 2

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Cadences serve as a musical GPS: They help you locate yourself harmonically. If the cadences keep returning to the same chord, the harmonic voyage is very circumscribed. In this excerpt from Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 in c-minor, the music wanders harmonically but keeps cadencing to the same harmonic goal. The last of these cadences, just before the piano enters, is particularly emphatic.

Example 3

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This excerpt from Arvo Pärt's Fratres creates a solemn stasis by repeatedly cadencing in the same place.

Example 4

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If, however, the **cadences** roam more widely, the **harmonic structure** is more adventurous. In this example from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's **Piano Concerto No. 17 in G-Major**, the cadence points change, propelling the music towards new goals.

Example 5

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^{*}Version 1.1: Aug 12, 2010 2:30 pm -0500

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The central advice of **Hearing Harmony** is "**Listen for cadences**, **not for chords**." Cadences reveal crucial information: They tell you the mode; and they show you if the harmony is moving or staying put. As we will explore in the succeeding modules, following the trajectory of the **cadences** is the key to hearing large-scale **harmonic structure**.