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## The Concept of Prolongation

In Schenkerian analysis the concept of *prolongation* is basic. Prolongation refers to the ways in which a musical component—a note (melodic prolongation) or a chord (harmonic prolongation)—remains in effect without being literally represented at every moment. Of the two main categories of prolongation, melodic and harmonic, the latter is easier to grasp. Essentially, a given harmony is prolonged so long as we feel it to be in control over a particular passage. A simple instance can be seen in mm. 1–2 of Example 138 (p. 135) where the subdominant prolongs the two tonic chords. In m. 3 we can still sense the influence of I, while II<sup>6</sup> (m. 4) prepares the dominant. The prolonged harmonies in this first phrase are therefore I (mm. 1–3) and V (mm. 4–5).

Additional examples of harmonic prolongation are given in Example 141; in each case the reasoning should be evident from context. Thus in Example 141*a* the first phrase begins and ends in I; scarcely can it be conceived as prolonging anything else. The second phrase changes direction midway, as indicated by the bass progression F<sup>#</sup>–G<sup>#</sup>–A, hence the shift from motion initiated by I (and prolonging I) to motion directed toward V (thereby prolonging V). In contrast, Example 141*b* as a whole prolongs I, with an intervening II–V that can be taken as an internal prolongation of V (see Exercise 1 at the end of this chapter for a correlation of the melodic and harmonic prolongations in this excerpt).

In Example 141*c* each measure is self-contained. The progression of m. 1 prolongs the tonic harmony. Measure 2 then prolongs VI; and the fourth measure prolongs V. The third measure is somewhat more complicated. The initial dominant 7th chord (G<sup>7</sup>) does not progress to I, but to a secondary dominant 7th of IV (hence the parenthesized roman numeral IV below the

## EXAMPLE 141

a. Bach, Chorale No. 356, *Jesu, meine Freude*

b. Mozart, *Piano Sonata in B $\flat$  major*, K. 333

c. Chopin, *Prelude in C minor*, Op. 28, No. 20

staff), and the progression is then completed with the arrival of I on the last quarter note in the measure.<sup>1</sup>

Melodic prolongation, meanwhile, builds upon the concept of diminution as discussed in Part One: namely, a melodic motion that maintains the *effect* of a given note despite the fact that this note is not literally present all of the time. There are three main types of melodic prolongation:

1. When the entire third measure is correctly understood to be a self-contained progression like the others, it then becomes evident that the upper-voice note on the last quarter must indeed be E $\flat$  of the tonic triad—not E of a secondary dominant to IV, as it appears in some editions. In a larger sense, however, this measure is preparatory to the one following, and the I that it prolongs functions less as a tonic than as a subdominant of V. In other words, though mm. 3 and 4, taken individually, prolong I and V respectively, the two taken together unmistakably point to V. This larger prolongation is shown in parentheses in Example 141*c*. The fact that the composer placed a single slur over both these measures (as opposed to two slurs for mm. 1 and 2) reinforces this last interpretation.

1. Motion *from* a given note, normally a *descending* diatonic scale segment or arpeggiation (where the prolongation *follows* the note that is prolonged);
2. Motion *to* a given note, normally an *ascending* diatonic scale segment or arpeggiation (where the prolongation *precedes* the note that is prolonged);
3. Motion *about* a given note, most frequently by means of upper and/or lower neighboring tones (which may in turn be prolonged themselves).

The specifications, given above, as to which is the prolonged note in each type of prolongation, are all subject to exception, depending on either the larger melodic structure or the harmonic prolongation currently in force. Type 1 in particular is often modified by the latter consideration, as in Example 138 (p. 135). There it would have been incorrect to read the soprano line of mm. 2–3 as prolonging E $\flat$ , owing to the concurrent harmonic prolongation of the tonic (B $\flat$ ) triad. The crucial factor is that E $\flat$  is not a structural member of that chord, but rather an upper neighbor to the chord tone D. In general, the prolonged *note* should belong to the prolonged *chord*. (In the case of the dominant, and sometimes II or IV, this can include the seventh as well as the triadic degrees 1, 3, 5, and 8.) As a companion illustration we offer a hypothetical revision of the beginning of the *Chorale St. Antoni* (Example 142; compare Example 137a, p. 133), in which E $\flat$  (though still a neighboring tone in the larger sense, as per Type 3 above) is correctly graphed as the prolonged note in mm. 2–3. What changes the situation is the

EXAMPLE 142. Hypothetical Revision of *Chorale St. Antoni*

The image shows three parts of a musical score for Example 142. Part (a) is the original notation in 2/4 time, showing a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Circled notes indicate specific points of interest. Part (b) is a harmonic reduction showing the chords in the left hand. Part (c) is another harmonic reduction, similar to (b), but with Roman numerals (I, IV, V) and a diagonal line drawn between the left hand's B $\flat$  and the right hand's second F, illustrating the interpretation of the neighbor-note figure.

new underlying harmony that goes from IV to V instead of immediately back to I. This motion from IV to V establishes V as a temporary goal in the hypothetical example, resulting in a prolongation of the dominant harmony of sufficient length to accommodate the line descending from E $\flat$  which prolongs that note as an expanded neighbor note.

### Exercises

a. Indicate:

1. the overriding linear progression;
2. the overriding harmonic progression;
3. subsidiary melodic prolongations.

b. Incorporate the above in a middleground sketch.

1. Sample Exercise: *Mozart, Sonata in B $\flat$  major, K. 333, I*

The image shows a musical score for a sample exercise, Mozart's Sonata in B $\flat$  major, K. 333, I, marked Allegro. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a circled note in the first measure of the treble staff.

Solution

The image shows a musical score for the solution of the sample exercise. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a diagonal line drawn between the left hand's B $\flat$  and the right hand's second F, illustrating the interpretation of the neighbor-note figure.

a. It may be helpful first to sketch the passage in plain noteheads (with slurs). The pattern of broken chords in the left hand can be represented by the bass line alone. It is generally best to keep the left hand in the bass clef and the right hand in the treble, even when the score does otherwise.

1. Overriding linear progression: F–E $\flat$ –D ( $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{4}$ – $\hat{3}$ ). The highest active degree of the tonic triad is the fifth, F. The G thereby becomes an upper neighbor, initially appearing as a grace note (performed on the beat as if it were the first of four sixteenths, but not written that way—an interesting reflection on the relationship of notation to structural meaning), then recurring in the latter half of m. 1. The F on the downbeat of m. 2, though an appoggiatura, actually completes the neighbor-note figure F–G–F, and can be understood as the fulfillment (rhythmically displaced) of a broken tonic chord. A diagonal line drawn between the left hand's B $\flat$  and the second F will show this interpretation graphically.



The task here is a common one: to use analytic notation to distinguish the descent at the cadence from those earlier lines that cover the same ground. Though for present purposes the labeling  $\overset{5}{\downarrow}\overset{4}{\downarrow}\overset{3}{\downarrow}$  is allowable, it must be noted that a study of the movement as a whole yields 3 as the primary melodic tone. (See FC, Fig. 145/5.)

6. Beethoven, *Seventh Symphony*, I

A first reduction of the top voice is already present in the doubling below it, and should give you a hint as to the true melodic progression in mm. 64–65 and 68–69. The pedal A through the downbeat of m. 69 illustrates the basic notion that the last statement of the descending line is the definitive one.

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# Prolongation of the Primary Tone: Initial Ascent

Despite the importance of the descending line at all structural levels, we frequently find motion in the opposite direction occurring in conjunction with it—that is, prolongational motion listed under type 2 in the previous chapter. When a motion such as this occurs at the beginning of a theme or work, and when it leads directly to the primary tone, it acquires special significance; if stepwise and ascending it is called an *initial ascent* (*Anstieg*).

A good example of an initial ascent occupies the first half of an eight-measure theme by Handel (Example 143) which, like the Haydn theme in the same key (Example 137a, p. 133), inspired Brahms to write a set of variations. The complete ascent is from B $\flat$  to F, but with considerable emphasis on D midway. To ascertain that F, not D, is the primary tone, we look for a descending line from that note. Though this does not occur immediately, we can pick up a stepwise progression beginning with the E $\flat$  in m. 6 that continues in a straightforward way thereafter. As a result, the ascent and descent balance each other in length (not a usual occurrence); the breadth of each, moreover, allows for various diminutional prolongations within the larger linear motion. These include the two neighbors about D in mm. 1–2, and the ascending line from C (itself prolonged in turn) to E $\flat$  in mm. 5–6. Though the line does go on to F in m. 6, the strength of the resolution from E $\flat$  to D on the downbeat of m. 7 leads to the reading of that particular F as an upper neighbor to E $\flat$ , and E $\flat$  as the prolonged note. The larger motion, from F (mm. 3–4) through E $\flat$  (m. 6) to D (m. 7), makes aural as well as logical sense (look ahead to Example 144). As mentioned in Chapter 8, consideration of the larger melodic structure can supersede the normal “rules” of melodic prolongation.