

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring - An Analysis

Objectives

By the end of this analysis you will have:

1. Reinforced your understanding of tonality.
2. Better understood important concepts in melody construction.
3. Reinforced your understanding of cadences.
4. Improved your listening skills.

Resources

To complete this analysis you will need:

- This worksheet
- The audio on the web site
- The video on the web site

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring

Old Man Bach

♩ = 100

The musical score is written for a single string instrument in 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of four measures each. The treble staff contains a melody of eighth notes, with groups of three notes beamed together and marked with a '3' above them. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with quarter notes. Above the first system, three boxes labeled 'i', 'iv', and 'v' are positioned above the first, second, and third measures respectively. Above the second system, three boxes labeled 'i', 'v', and 'i' are positioned above the first, second, and third measures respectively. A measure number '5' is placed at the beginning of the first measure of the second system.

The first thing that you'll need to do is learn to follow the dots as you are listening to the music. Watch the video again if you need to but this time count **123 123 123** for every bar, make the first **1** a little stronger than the others, it will be at the start of each bar.

So there are 8 bars with 9 notes in each (we'll call the first rest a note). Instead of trying to follow 72 individual dots just make sure that you keep up with the 8 bars, particularly those with the boxes **iv** above them.

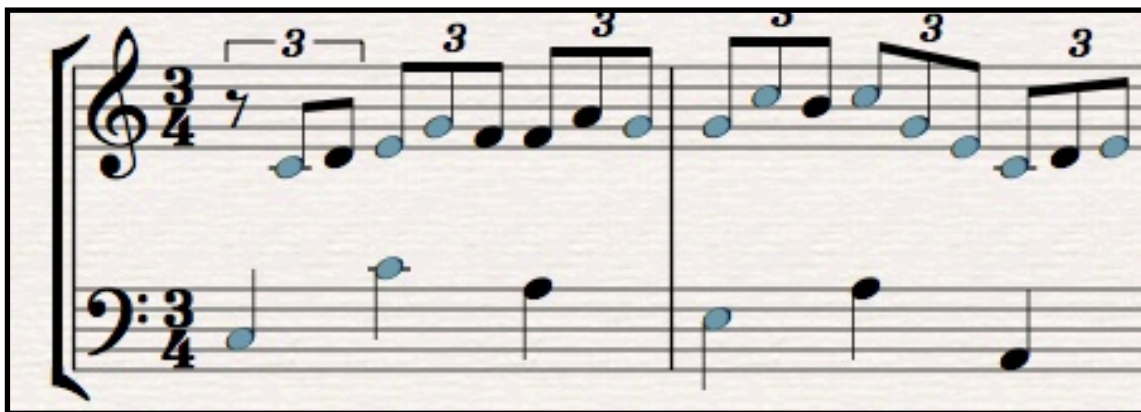
Now listen to Audio2 in the Resources section and see if you can follow the score. It has a piano playing chords under the melody to help you hear the changes.

TONALITY

The tune is written here in the key of C major, all the natural notes with no sharps or flats. If you haven't already I'd strongly recommend at this point reviewing [tonality](#) and [how chords are constructed](#) on the site.

THE MELODY

The first 2 bars introduce the tune in the key of C. The blue dots are the three notes, C, E and G, that make up a C major chord and therefore most strongly suggest a C major tonality.



The next 2 bars change tonality, firstly up to the subdominant (we'd call it the IV chord) and then to the dominant (V). The red dots are the notes in an F major chord, F, A and C while the brown dots are the four notes in a G7 chord, G, B, D and F.



Finally the last 8 bars return to the tonic centre apart from the perfect cadence at the end.



So Old Man Bach managed to write a 3 chord tune, without any chords in it. He was a clever fellow.

BREAKIN' IT DOWN

There's a lot of heavy lifting in this analysis if you've not done anything like this before so let's break it down a little.

The important stuff

This exercise is a listening task so the important thing to get from it is to be able to hear the changes in tonality, the cadences.

You could easily play chords to this tune, just go to C, F or G along with the melody.

Let's say you're playing along with some friends and someone starts singing *Swanee River*. Wouldn't it be great to instantaneously be able to play along in the right key without ever having played the song before just by listening for the changes in the melody? That's all we're doing here.

Leave it for later

Don't spend too much time worrying about the dots, I've only included them here as a visual aid and because some people will want to go there. You don't need to know that this note is called a C, an F or whatever for this particular exercise. If you wanted to obtain a score however and do this type of analysis for another song.....

BACK TO THE SCORE

So now go back to the score and listen to the audio. Make sure you can hear how the tonality stays the same over bars 1 and 2, changes through 3 and 4 and returns to the tonic in bar 5. Listen too for the perfect cadence in bars 7 and 8. Compare the two audio files if that helps.