1/XII/99: Tonal Relations in Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht"
Author(s): Richard Swift
Reviewed work(s):
Source: 19th-Century Music, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jul., 1977), pp. 3-14
Published by: University of California Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/746766
Accessed: 04/03/2012 03:44

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of
content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms
of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to 19th-
Century Music.
December 1899, emotionally if not legally the end of the old century, was the month in which two compositions were completed that would point the direction for much of the dawning century's music: Claude Debussy's *Nocturnes*, almost ten years in the process of composition, and Arnold Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, composed during that autumn of 1899. Each of these compositions has been said to be indebted to Wagner, the headiest musical force of the nineteenth century: *Nocturnes* to *Parsifal*, *Verklärte Nacht* to *Tristan und Isolde*. Even as received opinions go, this falls far short of the mark; it serves here as a reminder of the muffled critical attitudes typically applied to much turn-of-the-century music. With its subtle, luminous and subversive evasions of conventional late nineteenth-century tonal and structural processes, *Nocturnes*—especially *Nuages* and *Sirenes*—would seem to be the more drastic of the two works. In *Verklärte Nacht*, however, nineteenth-century compositional practice is confronted, embraced, and resolved: transformed by its twenty-five-year-old autodidact composer with an astonishing power and virtuosity of compositional thinking. And yet, despite its popularity in the concert hall—a fact often regretted by Schoenberg—the compositional ordering of the internal relations of *Verklärte Nacht* has remained almost uncharted territory.¹ While clinging to the bounds and

expectations of triadic tonality and tonal structure, it suggests, through its paradoxical combination of rigor and ambiguity, the air of other planets that would await its composer, as well as the art and craft of music, in the awakening twentieth century.

Schoenberg's obeisance to the nineteenth century's treasured notion of "program music" in Verklärte Nacht, and later in Pelleas und Melisande, is far more subtle than that of most of his predecessors or contemporaries. The symphonic poems of Liszt and his epigones are often makeshift affairs, the texts an effort to plaster over the seams of the music with literary vinegar-and-brown-paper. Often texts purporting to have some connection with the music were added later. Naturally enough, composers of such program music offered other, rather nobler, reasons for their reliance upon texts or upon literary and historical references: the "new music" of the mid-century had believed such programs were enough to guarantee its novelty, its estrangement from the "classical" past, its adherence to imagined "precepts" of Berlioz, Schumann, and the Beethoven of the Pastoral Symphony. For many composers, though, programmatic texts remained an easy means of assembling otherwise unrelated musical materials. Tchaikovsky, at work on Romeo and Juliet in 1869, received this advice from Balakirev: "Determine your plan. Do not worry about the actual musical ideas."2 Such a cold-blooded dismissal of the musical generation of a composition would have repelled Schoenberg; for his sextet, he chose a poem with internal structural relations that could be correlated with purely musical processes. The music is not a meandering fantasy or loose improvisation illustrating an anterior verbal plan, but a determined manifestation of the tonal principles of sonata structure. If the music does suggest the action of the poem and its psychological motion, it does so because the structural processes of both the poem and the music, considered abstractly, are similar. Egon Wellesz, in his book on Schoenberg,3 tried to make point-to-point identifications between the poem and the music in the approved nineteenth-century fashion, and Schoenberg himself, despite his fixed disavowal of such equivalences, wrote program notes as late as 1950 that attempt a similar set of connections.4 Much earlier, in a 1912 essay in Die Blaue Reiter, he had stated unequivocally his opposition to program music of the common variety: "The assumption that a piece of music must summon up images of one sort or another... is as widespread as only the false and banal can be."5

As he transcended program music in Verklärte Nacht, so Schoenberg also transformed many compositional techniques of the immediate past. The music of the sextet does not slavishly imitate models, but it does owe much to the music of Brahms and Wagner, "to which a flavor of Liszt, Bruckner, and perhaps also Hugo Wolf was added."6 Having confronted and having mastered those techniques—including modes of thematic construction and combination, of development and extension ("Brahms's technique of developing variation")—the youthful composer achieved an intensely personal style. Gone were the times of blind partnership for either Brahms or Wagner, for "what in 1883 seemed an impassable gulf was in 1897 no longer a problem."8 The stylistic and technical accomplishments of those masters could now be blended without hesitation, for there was no longer any incongruity in their propinquity. Later, in "Brahms the Progressive," Schoenberg analyzed types of thematic construction to be found in Brahms's music. Many

---

2M. D. Calvacoressi and Gerald Abraham, Masters of Russian Music [New York, 1936].
3Egon Wellesz, Arnold Schoenberg [London, 1925].
4Arnold Schoenberg, notes for Verklärte Nacht, 26 August 1950, in the booklet for "The Music of Arnold Schoenberg," vol. 2, Columbia Records M2S 694. Schoenberg wrote that the music "does not illustrate any action or drama, but is restricted to portray nature and to express human feelings. It seems that, due to this attitude, my composition has gained qualities which can also satisfy if one does not know what it illustrates, or, in other words, it offers the possibility to be appreciated as 'pure' music."
6Ibid., p. 141
7Ibid.
8Ibid., p. 399.
of these—such as model and sequence, incomplete sequence, the extension and expansion of thematic contours by diminution or augmentation of temporal patterns—are similar to the essential thematic unfoldings, continuations and developments of Verklärte Nacht.

To cite a specific case, the melody in example 1 unfolds downward-leaping fourths that expand to fifths and sixths in a sequence (mm. 259–61) whose half measure is a diminution of m. 255. The climax of the melody (mm. 262–64) combines upward fourths and downward fifths in a rhythmic structure that includes both the previous eighth-note pattern and an irregular diminution of m. 256. The final descending scale in even eightths smooths out the linear and rhythmic angularities of the melody [ex. 1]:

[Music notation image]

Example 1

Schoenberg was to dub Grundgestalt, or basic shape, that rationalization of the materials of music made to create relational connections at every level, to make richly congruent compositional contexts. Hierarchical reduction as a critical tool was deduced from this fundamental and universal aspect of compositional thinking; in the twentieth century, reduction becomes a primary mode of apprehending works of art [in music, from Schenker onward] and, in an extended interpretation, a mode of comprehending the relations of human nature in the world [from Husserl onward]. When applied to the music of Verklärte Nacht, reduction reveals the inter-

relationships of one diatonic scale segment (ut-re-mi-fa) nested in the perfect fourth. The profound effects of this scale segment in shaping the musical structure and its textures can be traced both in relations among strands of primary and subsidiary motivic material and in large-scale tonal relations, while local tonal connections unfold a network of parallel intervallic relations.

To have begun by emphasizing the purely musical aspects of Verklärte Nacht is not to minimize the importance to Schoenberg of the poetry of Richard Dehmel. “At the end of the 19th century, the foremost representatives of the ‘Zeitgeist’ in poetry were Detlev von Liliencron, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Richard Dehmel.”9 Between 1897 and 1907, according to Jan Maegaard’s brilliant reconstruction of the chronology of Schoenberg’s music,10 Schoenberg completed or sketched fourteen settings of Dehmel’s poems, in addition to sketching two uncompleted orchestral works and composing the sextet. Three of these settings were completed shortly before or during the composition of Verklärte Nacht: Warnung, op. 3, no. 3; Erwartung, op. 2, no. 1; and Erhebung, op. 2, no. 3. In 1912, Schoenberg replied to a letter from Dehmel, who had expressed the pleasure given him by a recent performance of the sextet:

Your poems had a decisive influence on my development as a composer. They were what first made me try to find a new tone in the lyrical mood. Or rather, I found it even without looking, simply by reflecting in music what your poems stirred up in me. People who know my music can bear witness to the fact that my first attempts to compose settings for your poems contain more of what subsequently developed in my work than there is in many a much later composition.11

The estimate of the importance of Schoenberg’s Dehmel settings in the development of his style

---

10Jan Maegaard, Studien zur Entwicklung des dodekaphonen Satzes bei Arnold Schoenberg [Copenhagen, 1972].
contained in the last sentence quoted above has not been surpassed by later critics. Richly worked-out contrapuntal textures and a dense allusiveness of pitch and interval relations make the settings of the Dehmel poems in opera 2, 3 and 6 far superior to the settings of other texts in the same collections, admirable as these may be on their own terms.

Despite the present low ebb of his literary reputation, Dehmel's poems enjoyed considerable vogue in pre-World War I Germany and Austria. Their mildly erotic tone combined with striking post-Baudelairean and post-Nietzschean sensuousness of imagery and language to give an impression of sexual candor so typical of Jugendstil. The poem that serves as point of departure for Schoenberg's sextet was published with the title Verklärte Nacht in the first edition of Dehmel's collection Weib und Welt (1896), and later was incorporated into his verse novel Zwei Menschen (1903). Although the novel postdates the composition of the sextet, it exhibits a pre-compositional planning that must have appealed to the composer. It consists of three parts, each containing thirty-six poems (Vorgänge) of thirty-six lines each. A twelve-line Eingang precedes each part; there is an eight-line Leitlied at the beginning, and a four-line Ausgang at the end of the novel. Allusions and resonances among words and themes abound among the poems in the three parts of the novel. For example, the first poem in each part has beginning and ending lines that echo back and forth, like a transformed refrain:

I.1 Zwei Menschen gehn durch kahlen, kalten Hain. 
Zwei Menschen gehn durch hohe, helle Nacht.

II.1 Zwei Menschen reiten durch maihellen Hain 
Zwei Menschen reiten in die Welt.

Similar constructional ingenuities are shared by the other poems in the novel, they are typical of Dehmel's poetry.

The Verklärte Nacht poem, printed in the score of the string orchestra arrangement, has irregular line groupings—six lines for the opening description of the physical scene, twelve lines for the woman's confession, four more lines of description, eleven lines for the man's avowal, and a final three lines affirming their union—and a rhyme scheme which illuminates line structure with pairs of rhymes at the beginning of each division, intricately unfolding rhymes for the woman's speech, and tightly unfolding rhymes for the man's. The "double" exposition of the poem, with direct speech of the woman and the man, must have provided an impetus for Schoenberg's novel structure—a pair of sonatas with contrasting, although closely related, motivic materials and tonal relationships. It must also have suggested the combining and blending of motives from the first sonata with those in the second. The great, if simple, shift of mode from predominantly minor in the first sonata to predominantly major in the second serves to emphasize the relative rhythmic and melodic incompleteness of the first and the relative rhythmic and melodic completeness of the second. The development of these contrasts is resolved in the tonal serenity of the coda.

Although usually described as being in five sections, Verklärte Nacht consists of the two intimately related sonata movements, the first of which has a truncated—if not to say impacted—recapitulation of first group materials only. The two sonata structures are preceded by an Introduction, and they are linked by a Transition in which the materials of the Introduction return in a tonal area made important in the Introduction [bvi] and are provided with a new cadence. Sonata II has a normal recapitulation. [References are to the sextet; measure numbers are the same in the string orchestra arrangement.]
Introduction (1–28)  

Sonata I  

Exposition  
- First Group, Part I (29–49)  
- Part II (50–62)  
- Bridge (63–104)  
- Second Group (105–132)  

Development  
- Part I (132–168)  
- Part II (169–180)  

"Recapitulation" (shortened)  
- First Group (181–187)  

Transition (188–228)  

Sonata II  

Exposition  
- First Group (229–244)  
- Bridge (244–48)  
- Second Group (249–277)  
- Codetta (278–294)  

Development  
- Part I (294–319)  
- Part II (320–340)  

Recapitulation  
- First Group (341–363)  
- Bridge (363–369)  
- Second Group (370–390)  
- Coda (391–end)  

Reduction of Tonal Plan:  
- First Sonata  
- Second Sonata  

\{D minor\}


“The very essence of romance is uncertainty,” Algernon remarks in *The Importance of Being Earnest*—a principle those composers commonly called Romantic were quick to discover. Algernon would have been the first to recognize the pleasures of uncertainty in the tonal ambiguity of the first movement of Schumann’s *Fantasy,* or in the tensions of the open structure of the first song of *Dichterliebe*; he might have been slower to perceive the clouded whole-step progression from the beginning to the end of *Tristan.* For Schoenberg in the sextet, the shaping of rhythms, motive contours, and local tonal relationships are contingent upon uncertainty and its capacity for ambiguity. In *Verklärte Nacht,* the first of his one-movement sonata compositions—*Pelleas und Melisande,* the First Quartet, and the First Chamber Symphony are prominent among its successors—Schoenberg was to transcend by such means the tonal principles of sonata exemplified by the neo-classicism of Brahms, Bruckner, and Strauss.

In its simplest form, the global tonal scaffolding of *Verklärte Nacht* can be reduced to: i–II–i–III–iv–I, or *ut–re–mi–fa.* This scale segment permeates the fundamental linear and vertical progressions of the entire sextet. It is the primary element of the Introduction, whose falling scale motive ranges over the "tonic hexachord" (the sixth to first scale degrees), initiating a contour that is at once incomplete—its many repetitions arouse anticipation for completion of the scale pattern—and static. At m. 13, completion seems near, for the motive moves to the "dominant hexachord" (third downward to fifth scale degrees), but the shift involves a conflict over the raised and lowered forms of the sixth and seventh scale degrees, a conflict that serves to extend the sense of scalar, as well as motivic, incompleteness. Rhythmic fragmentation, arising from the amassing of one-measure units, creates a temporal breathlessness that will not be dispelled fully until the broader and rhythmically more stable expanses of Sonata II are reached.

While it is in the nature of introductions to expose weakly shaped contours and immediately unresolved harmonic contexts, the motives and progressions that occur in Sonata I itself are scarcely more complete, giving rise to the uncertainty that is so prominent a part of the character of this music. The first group sentence begins with a continuation of the one-measure unit inherited from the Introduction, and the sentence motive is repeated rather than transposed. The bass line is formed from an inversion of the chief Introduction motive; its ascending diatonic scale pattern in—at first—one-measure units serves to emphasize the ambiguous nature of the sentence itself. The cadence of the first group (end of m. 57–m. 62) presents the whole step in the melody with thirds in the opposing bass; the whole step is then used as the basis for the sequence of augmented chords and chromatic motives that concludes the exposition, a sequence proceeding by whole steps in each of the voices (mm. 128–31).
The most remote tonal relations, the most complicated chromatic inflections, the lengthiest of delays in resolving non-chord tones in the sextet are rooted firmly in the plainness of diatonic reduction. Certainly the passage that begins the development of Sonata I [mm. 135–52] is the furthest removed from an encompassing triadic tonal area of any in Verklärte Nacht. In “How One Becomes Lonely,” Schoenberg compared this passage with a similar passage in the Fourth Quartet as an instance of “more violent expression.”\^\textsuperscript{13} In the sextet, its expressive role is clear because its structural function as the commencement of the development—the area of a sonata in which wide-ranging tonal movement is expected—is clear. The section consists of a complex segment of music that is repeated a whole step higher. Each of the elements of the segment functions within the framework of a diatonic scale segment. First, there occurs a linear contour that creates the effect of appoggiatura-resolution by half step—a Neapolitan-derived scale-degree relation—to the members of the C♯-minor triad. When the last member [E in this spelling] is reached, the other voices have changed so that the meaning of the final resolution [mm. 135–36] becomes ambiguous. This process is followed immediately by a descending contour incorporating an augmented triad within its pattern and harmonized by minor and diminished triads. The second element consists of an expanded version of the motive of the second part of the first group, here heard in conjunction with an expanded version of the appoggiatura-resolution pattern [mm. 137–40]. The final element consists of a shortened version of the motive from the beginning of the first group with a chromatic scale anticipation, its model and sequence moving by whole step in all voices [mm. 141–43]. The normalizing characteristics of the diatonic scale segments, voice-leading expectations, whole-step relations, and patterns of motive expansion and reduction contrive to nest this section into the music that precedes and follows. Tonally remote as this section must have seemed at its first performance, it fits smoothly into the compositional processes of the music; the dissonance treatment employed is far more rigorously and exactingly controlled than in many another less tonally vagrant section of the music.

At the center of Verklärte Nacht [m. 188ff], there occurs the section—the Transition—that rounds off Sonata I and at the same time links the two sonatas together. Again, the whole step and diatonic scale segment provide the essential tonal scheme. The music returns to the downward scale motive from the Introduction, a return prepared for by a long, almost unaccompanied, passage. This thirteen-measure passage [mm. 188–200] conveys in petto the subtility, strength, and originality of Schoenberg’s manner of evolving melodic contours and contrapuntal voices, demonstrating anew the essentially diatonic nature of the musical elements, however transmuted by chromatic inflection (ex. 2):

\[ \text{Example 2} \]

The downward motion of the recitave-like melodic line and its bass contains the ur-motive of a diatonic scale segment forming a perfect fourth (two whole steps and a half step). The passage may be considered a paradigm of those fundamental elements, a compositional reduction that reveals a capacious potential for transformation and connection. The upper and lower neighbor tones and passing tones that are introduced into the downward melodic motion focus upon its diatonic basis. The bass, too, projects the same image as it moves by whole step and by leap through the fourth. As the whole motive emerges in its usual contour [m. 201ff], it

\[^\text{13} \text{Style and Idea, pp. 30–33.}\]
shocks by commencing its descent on the “wrong” scale degree: not on the sixth, as in the Introduction, but on the fourth scale degree, descending to the seventh. This is as disruptive of the sense of tonal location as are the chromatic chords within which the melody is placed, a diminished chord moving to an augmented triad. This shuddering and constantly iterated music is eventually heard in a sequence that finally reaches the tranquillity of the subdominant of bvi. That pitch, Eb, reaches back to the beginning of the motive in m. 201, rounding off the passage with a return to that contextually important fourth scale degree.

The whole step continues to play a major role in Sonata II, combining with the fourth and the thirds implicit in both foreground and background of the thematic material to produce the consoling—because intervallically explicit—climactic melody that concludes the development section, a melody that will be heard briefly at the onset of the coda (ex. 3):

As the outline of major tonal areas of Verklärte Nacht [page 7] demonstrates, there is an astonishing absence of emphasis upon the dominant as a large-scale tonal area. This evasion of the dominant is reflected in local harmonic progressions as well, especially in Sonata I, although there are many dominant-substitute progressions, both in tonic and other chord areas, whose function is to modify their respective tonal areas indirectly, deceptively and ambiguously. Even when a dominant function is implied by a pedal—as in mm. 100–04, where the dominant of II is in the bass—the harmonic meaning of the pedal is blurred by non-dominant pitches. In this instance, the dominant of the dominant appears over the dominant pedal; the pitches of that chord establish a connection with the second group material by becoming the main pitches of its first melodic contour, this time over a tonic pedal (mm. 105–07). The tension produced by these large-scale suspensions, for so they are treated contextually, is tightened by irregular temporal resolutions; often, when a resolution takes place, the note of resolution has become part of a new and uncertain harmonic context, to assume a meaning different from the one anticipated. It is through such means that restless motion and melodic incompleteness are achieved in Sonata I.

In structural positions where powerful dominant areas might be expected—such as the end of an exposition, the beginning or end of a development section—Sonata I again evades the issue. The sequence of augmented triads that ends the exposition has nothing directly to do with the dominant, although the need for resolution may suggest a typical function of the dominant. It leads to a cadence on a chord which serves as a substitute for the dominant of bIII, and the lowest note (E) of that dominant-substitute chord becomes the initiator of the development section. This unsupported, ferociously sustained pitch refers in several directions: back to the II area of the second group, to the dominant, and to the extremely ambiguous bIII that follows. The preparation for the recapitulation of Sonata I takes place on the dominant-substitute of the dominant. While this is scarcely an unusual procedure in itself, its significance here lies in its oblique evasion of the dominant.

In Sonata II, relations among large-scale progressions, melodic contours, local harmony, and rhythmic movement are manifestly more complete and more strongly shaped than in Sonata I, a set of circumstances that is confirmed by the more normative use of dominant area relations. The broad, succinctly presented first-group sentence, with its cloud of motives from Sonata I, cadences on iii. In the bridge, the dominant of iii is prolonged and, with a shift to the major mode, the second group begins its long, firmly structured melody. The
codetta, on the dominant of III [written enharmonically as D♭], presents a new melodic contour that moves downward over the triad and whose second phrase begins with a form of the downward scale motive in diminution. Although the codetta concludes with a tonicization of ♭III—through the dominant of the tonic—the development section pivots about two powerful dominant statements. The first part of the development section cadences emphatically on the dominant (mm. 316–19), with a deceptive movement from that cadence into a new tonal area [V of III]. At the end of the second part of the development (mm. 332–40), the harmony is violently wrenched from the dominant of the III area to the dominant itself in order to prepare for the recapitulation in a normal tonal manner.

The dominant, then, plays a secondary part in the unfolding of major tonal areas of the sextet. There are several other tonal areas whose importance is greater in shaping the large-scale tonal functions. The Introduction first hints at and later emphasizes strongly two chords destined to assume crucial roles in subsequent and subsidiary events in the two sonatas: ♭vi/♭VI and ♭III. The latter sometimes appears in its function as the dominant of the former; it sometimes exists as a tonal area by itself. The progression that links the two parts of the first group (mm. 41–49) moves through the dominant of ♭III, which quickly turns toward the dominant of ♭vi in mm. 46–49. Schoenberg was inordinately proud of this progression, referring to the passage several times in his writings, notably in Harmonielehre where he was intent upon explaining the theoretical status of the famous ninth chord with the ninth (marked “X”) in the bass (ex. 4):

Example 4

In "Criteria for the Evaluation of Music," he explained that because of this "single uncatalogued dissonance," Verklärte Nacht was rejected for performance by a Viennese concert group. But this progression has a grander function in the sextet than as a source for a particular chord-construction and usage, or even as a local linking passage, for it returns at two crucial structural points. First, it is the harmonic scaffolding for the recapitulation of the first group sentence (mm. 181–87), and is in part responsible for the ambiguity and uncertainty of that return (ex. 5):

Example 5

---

14Ibid., pp. 131–32.
Second, this "uncatalogued dissonance" returns in the first part of the coda as part of a succession of important motives from the composition, this time beginning on the raised third scale degree to reflect the modal shift of Sonata II (ex. 6):

Example 6

The $b\text{vi}$ chord, touched upon in the Introduction, emerges as the tonal area of the second part of the first group of Sonata I; it is prepared for linearly by the $F^\# (=G_b)$ of mm. 46–49, a lowered sixth scale degree in $b\text{vi}$, which functions here as the Neapolitan of the dominant of $b\text{vi}$, a common Brucknerian relationship. The other extensive $b\text{vi}$ area of Sonata I occurs in the Transition, discussed above. Its role in Sonata II is limited to minor appearances.

These third relations among tonal areas, such as $i$–$b\text{vi}$ or $i$–$b\text{III}$ or $I$–$\text{III}$, are extended to other compositional levels, particularly as intervals of transposition for sequence segments. In Sonata I, the minor third is often the basis for sequences—for example, the large-scale repetition of mm. 75–82 rising a minor third higher in mm. 83–90, or the series of sequences in the development section from m. 153 with each segment rising a minor third. The ambiguity of tonal direction that results from the linear diminished triads is especially potent in its intensification of the weak and uncertain motivic contours and harmonic progressions in Sonata I. The major third appears somewhat less prominently in such circumstances; but when it occurs, the resulting linearly and vertically stated augmented triads have a powerful effect on harmonic and melodic stability. A compelling summary of linear and vertical third relations occurs at the conclusion of the development section, Sonata I, m. 169ff, where augmented, major, minor and diminished triads are systematically exhibited both as melodic contours and as chords in the preparation for the dominant of the dominant.

In Sonata II, $b\text{III}$ continues in its strong modifying support of the primary tonal areas. The development section begins (mm. 294ff) in the area of $b\text{III}$. In its function of the dominant of $b\text{vi}$, it is the point of arrival of the sequence arising from the end of the melody of example 3 at the beginning of m. 322, as well as the moment in which the first of the tonal abruptions occurs as the development is pulled toward the dominant. It functions in the second group of the recapitulation as part of a larger progression toward the minor subdominant (mm. 376–78), where it is heard for a final time in the sextet as a member of the global scale degree motion $D$–$E$–$F$–$G$.

The half-step relationship that has the most far-reaching consequences in Verklärte Nacht is that of the Neapolitan. It is encountered frequently as a modification of local linear and vertical contexts, as in the linkage between two tonal areas in mm. 46–49. In this passage, discussed above, the $F^\# (=G_b)$ assumes the function of the Neapolitan of V of $b\text{vi}$; and it later takes on the function of $b\text{vi}$ of $b\text{vi}$. This resultant complex of meanings is an essential characteristic of the oblique and ambiguous tonal movement of Sonata I, encouraged by linear and vertical Neapolitan relations. By analogy, the chromatic inflection of linear elements reflects and prolongs the action of the Neapolitan relation. The Neapolitan serves as an intensification of the ii–V–iv progression in m. 34ff. Yet another instance of Neapolitan linkage, whose dramatic intensity is in part owed to those previously encountered Neapolitan relations, occurs between the Transition and Sonata II. The
Transition cadences upon the minor subdominant of $\flatVI$ with only the $Bb$ remaining from the subdominant triad. The $Bb$, in a manner analogous to that of mm. 46–49, leads to the major tonic as the Neapolitan of the fifth scale degree, as $\flatVI$ of I, and as a foreshadowing of the $A_\flat$ of the III region, the tonal area of the second group.

The Neapolitan also has a major function in the tonal wrenching toward the dominant that takes place near the end of the development section of Sonata II [mm. 332–36]. The sequences of the preceding section halt abruptly, leaving the melody and its subsidiary contrapuntal lines stuck for some time in the same place, $\flatIII$, before they plunge with equal abruptness to the dominant in preparation for the recapitulation.

II has functioned, more or less conventionally, as a substitute for IV in earlier phases of the music, but from the beginning of this recapitulation, it comes to the fore as an independent entity to isolate the subdominant area in preparation for the $iv-\flatII-I$ cadence which concludes the sextet. The brief detail of the major-minor subdominant triads in the first group exposition (ex. 7):

![Example 7](image)

is expanded in the recapitulation both through repetition [mm. 342, 349, 351, and 355] and through the cadence on the subdominant [mm. 358–61] that is an element in a large-scale progression: I–$ii-V-IV-V$ [mm. 353–63]. This expanded statement of subdominant function continues with equal force in the return of the second group, where, as the minor subdominant, it becomes an element in that progression toward $\flatIII$ discussed above, as well as the immediate goal of the progression of which $\flatIII$ is itself an element [mm. 375–80]. The articulation of the subdominant area at this, the penultimate stage of the composition, is an affirmation of those stable and stabilizing properties of diatonic tonality. It is generally in such a position, near the end of a tonal composition, that the subdominant [or its substitute, II] is given strong functional emphasis; Schoenberg’s analytical reduction of tonal function on the model of a complete cadence pattern—I–IV– ($or$ II–) V–I—is rooted in the observation of this phenomenon in tonal music. Schoenberg was not blindly obeying some unwritten canon, for in *Verklärte Nacht* the structural emphasis upon the subdominant links back to the II area of Sonata I, and forward, in combination with $\flatII$, to the coda’s concluding cadence, incorporating in its references those Neapolitan relations that function so compellingly throughout the sextet. The sustained emphasis upon the tonic from the beginning of the recapitulation of Sonata II to the end at once rights the intensely dramatic tonic imbalance of much of the preceding music, and at the same time provides a stable context in which the combined subdominant–Neapolitan cadence may make its full effect.

In this discussion of tonal functions in *Verklärte Nacht*, much has been said about the correlation between motive generation and the explicit global tonal relations of the music, particularly as an aspect of the unfolding of the diatonic intervals from the perfect fourth. The ingenuity and fluency with which linear contours represent compositional prolongations of those intervals is nowhere more clearly discernible than at the beginning of the coda [m. 391ff], where the succession of motives from earlier stages of the sextet succinctly displays that framework for motive and tonal generation (ex. 8):

![Example 8](image)
Schoenberg was justly proud of the speed and facility with which he composed the sextet, even permitting his memory to compress the actual composition time to a dramatic three weeks.\(^{15}\) The sense of compression and rigor of composition conveyed by Schoenberg's exaggerated statement is matched in its intensity by the music, with its controlled contrapuntal density of motive combinations flourishing as prolongations of the basic tonal materials. Schoenberg, in the same essay, cites the passage that occurs at the beginning of the development of Sonata I (mm. 161–68), where a motive is presented in its original and inverted forms both in succession and, finally, in combination, as an instance of contrapuntal ingenuity that cost him some effort to accomplish.\(^{16}\) It is precisely such a passage—and there are many others that are comparable, including the recapitulation, Sonata I (ex. 5), and the return of the second group, Sonata II—where textures display functional connections in layer upon layer of voices, that further confirms the sense of compression in the sextet. Similarly, compression is conveyed by the spatial placement of melodic lines conceived as a mingling of several voices in several registers. One such melodic contour, existing within a network of timbres and registers, occurs at the beginning of the second part of the first group, Sonata I (ex. 9):

\[\text{Example 9}\]

The upper voice, presented in octaves, is both a counterpoint to and an answering variation and amplification of the cello line. Such modes of extending and proliferating melodic contours from a single line into wider zones of instrumental space mark off other structural areas of the music—as in the second group of Sonata II—and share in non-imitative contrapuntal textures—as in the bridge of Sonata I, m. 69ff. Through such melodic configurations, Schoenberg was able to widen the forms motives may take and to deepen the connections among them with their engendering elements.

In Schoenberg's later version for string orchestra (1917, revised 1943), there are no substantive changes from the music of the original sextet. This version, with its bold and luxurious sonorities, is more familiar to the concert-goer than is the leaner, more intimate sextet version, for concerts by string sextets are rarities. There are many added or expanded indications of nuances, clarifications of tempo markings (all instructions are given in Italian instead of the German of the original), metronome markings (absent from the sextet), and occasional revisions of notation. Among the latter, there is a written-out late instance of the triplet interpretation of duple notation that occurs in the sextet (ex. 10):

\[\text{Example 10}\]

\(^{15}\)"Heart and Brain in Music," ibid., pp. 55–56. See Maegaard, op. cit., for details of the chronology of Verklärte Nacht.

\(^{16}\)Style and Idea, pp. 55–56. The example given by Schoenberg is incorrect, presenting only those measures in which the two motive forms appear in succession (mm. 161–62), not in combination—an error future editors may wish to correct.
Among the many subtle shifts of string sonorities and masses with which Schoenberg contrived to articulate the musical structure in this new medium, the passage from m. 161—with the motive in both its original and inverted forms—is notable for its clarity and delicacy, made possible by the use of eleven solo strings and divided second violins to articulate primary and secondary contrapuntal voices. The textural clarity is aided by octave doubling and by the contrasts in sonority provided by muted solo instruments while the second violins remain unmuted.

Schoenberg often heard the plaintive remark about *Verklärte Nacht*, “If only he had continued to compose in this style,” to which he replied: “I have not discontinued composing in the same style and in the same way as at the very beginning. The difference is only that I do it better now than before; it is more concentrated, more mature.”* That vocation for composition, to which the sextet is a burning witness, radically transformed musical thinking in the new century by creating a music whose every layer and corner is permeated by concentrated relations and connections—enmeshing all, as Henry James wrote, in “the wonder of the consciousness of everything.”

---