Web Feature 11.1

Non-chord tones in score context

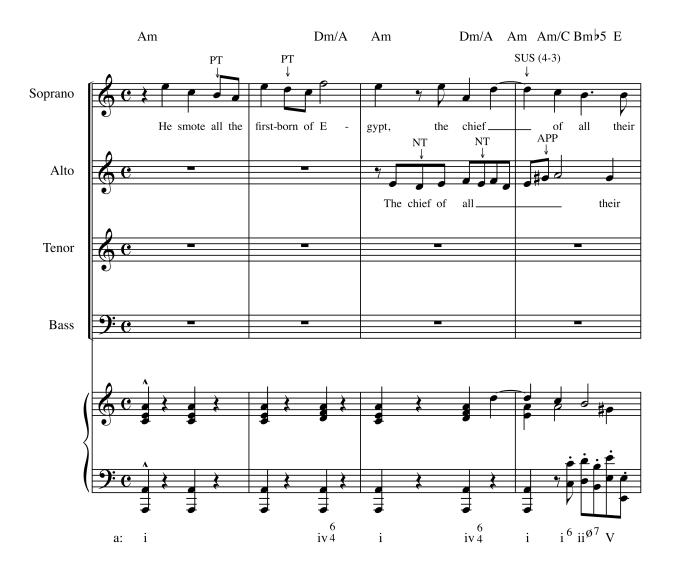
It is important to be able to recognize non-chord tones in a musical score and understand how they contribute to the expressiveness of a passage. One consideration is the prominence or emphasis that non-chord tones receive through their duration relative to the primary pulse stream of the meter. Thus far, most of the non-chord tones we have examined are **submetrical** dissonances—that is, they are shorter than the value of the primary pulse stream, and thus occur *within* the time span of the beat, on either the accented or unaccented portion of the beat. Non-chord tones can also be **metrical** having the same duration as the primary pulse stream (a suspension lasting a quarter-note long in a passage of $\frac{4}{4}$ meter, for example)—or they can be **supermetrical**, longer than the durational value of the primary pulse stream.

One of the distinctive features of music of a particular historical period is the way in which dissonances are used. The following remarks about historical style are intended as generalizations, for which of course any number of exceptions can be found; every historical period has its "vanguard" composers who anticipated later styles, as well as more conservative throwbacks to earlier eras. Even within the work of a single composer one can easily find works that lie at stylistic extremes. In general, however, there seems to be a gradual acceptance of and freedom in the use of dissonances as one progresses through the common practice period. In this web feature we examine the stylistic differences in each historical period's use of dissonance.

The Baroque era. In Baroque music, one will generally find passing, neighbor, and escape tones used in unaccented contexts along with suspensions or, less frequently, retardations; appoggiaturas are somewhat less common. In general such non-chord tones occur as submetrical dissonances. Web Examples 11.1 through 11.3 illustrate how dissonances are used in three different Baroque contexts: one of Bach's Brandenburg Concerti, a chorus from a Handel oratorio, and a solo keyboard work by the English composer Henry Purcell, respectively.



Web Example 11.1. Bach, Brandenburg Concerto #3 (iii), measures 1–2.







Web Example 11.2. George Frederick Handel, "He smote all the first born" (*Israel in Egypt*), mm. 1–12.



Web Example 11.3. Henry Purcell, "A New Ground in E Minor," Z. T.682 (measures 22–31, ornaments omitted).

iv⁶

 $\mathrm{IV}^{\,6}$

 V^6

i

e:

6 i4

i ⁶

4 V3

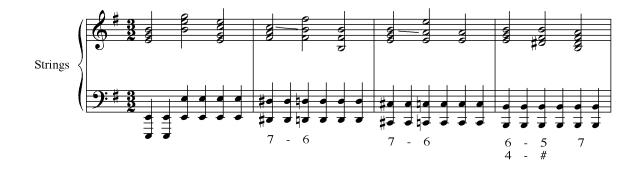
6

i

ii⁰⁶ V

i

Certain genres tend to be richer in their use of dissonance; the religious works of J. S. Bach, for example, tend to have very chromatic and dissonant passages where scenes such as the Crucifixion are depicted. For example, consider the opening of the "Crucifixus" from Bach's *Mass in B Minor* (Web Example 11.4). The first four measures can be analyzed as a series of 7–6 suspensions over a descending bass line that is itself elaborated with chromatic passing tones. As the voices enter, one by one, in measures 59, other suspensions are introduced: a 4–3 suspension in the alto with the dissonant fourth flatted and, again, set over a chromatic passing tone in the bass (measures 6–7), and a 9–8 suspension in the bass (measures 8–9). Then, starting in measure 13, Bach introduces a different chromatic idea—an ascending augmented second, the interval that we have seen was associated with anguished emotional states. Such is the nature of this work's chromaticism that assigning Roman numeral labels to each chord will not yield very illuminating results; remember, this is the product of more linear, contrapuntal thinking, before the "vertical" orientation of Rameau's theory of triad inversions came into widespread use. However, figured bass can readily be employed, both for showing the intervals of specific dissonances and also the chromatic inflections applied to those dissonances.

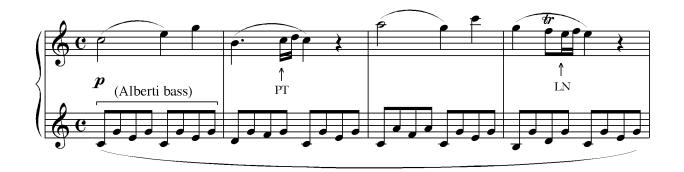






Web Example 11.4. Bach, "Crucifixus," B Minor Mass, measures 1-16.

The Classic era. The Classic era was, in some respects, a simplification of the intricate and sometimes sprawling textures of the Baroque (in fact, the label "baroque" is also used to describe a misshapen pearl). Homophonic textures were emphasized, with accompaniment often provided by an arpeggiated figuration known as **Alberti bass**, named after the early-eighteenth-century Italian composer Domenico Alberti (1710–1740). Web Example 11.5 is a stereotypical case study in Classic texture; note the clarity and uncluttered register of the melodic line, Mozart's use of the Alberti bass, and the way that individual tones in the Alberti bass move to their neighbors with subsequent chord changes, reflecting careful attention to contrapuntal voice leading principles.



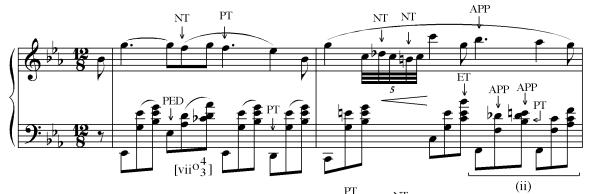
Web Example 11.5. Mozart Sonata K.545 (i), measures 1–4, showing Alberti bass and sparing use of non-chord tones.

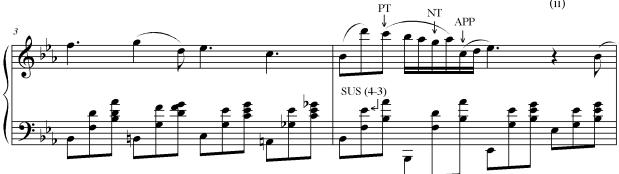
In general, dissonances in the Classic period are not as frequent, or as emphatic, as they are in music of the Romantic era (although, again, exceptions to this generalization can always be found). The Mozart excerpt in Web Example 11.5 has very few dissonances. The opening of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in F major, op. 10 no. 2 (Web Example 11.6) has some prominently placed neighbor groups "answering" the chords in measures 1 and 3; in measures 5 through 12 suspensions are used extensively.

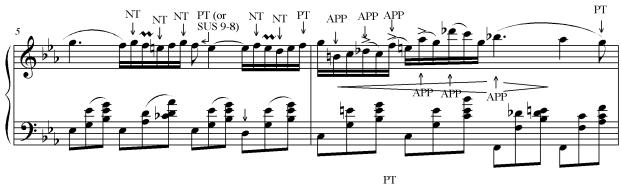


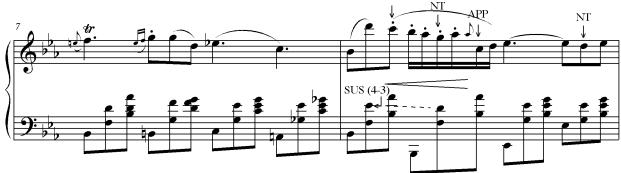
Web Example 11.6. Beethoven Piano Sonata op. 10 no. 2 (i), measures 1–12.

The Romantic era. In keeping with Romanticism's emphasis on the individual expression of the composer, dissonances are used more freely in Romantic music, occurring more frequently on accented beats and often as metrical or supermetrical dissonances. Web Example 11.7, from a nocturne by Fréderic Chopin (1810–1849), shows a richer use of melodic embellishment (especially in measures 5-8) and of harmonic dissonance, so much so that sometimes it is an open question as to which tones to count as dissonances and which to count as consonances. For example, the notes in the left hand that make up the first and third dotted-quarter beats of measure 1 make up a tonic chord. But what about the second dotted-quarter beat? One could count the low E flat as a pedal point and the rest of beat 2 as a vii_{3}^{04} , especially since the F in the melodic line also would fit the chord. On the other hand, the stepwise motion in the arpeggiations of the left hand from chord to chord would also invite a reduction in which the *first measure* is essentially a tonic chord; the "vii $_{3}^{04}$ " would thus be the product of neighbor tones. Neither interpretation is more "correct" than the other, because we can logically account for both interpretations by the evidence in the score. Ultimately, the choice is determined by larger factors, such as the prevailing harmonic rhythm of the piece and the amount of detail desired.









Web Example 11.7. Chopin, Nocturne op. 9 no. 2 in E-flat major, measures 1-8.

Finally, dissonance itself became "emancipated" by the second half of the nineteenth century, as composers began to employ dissonances in ways that sometimes

did not take account of theoretical categories determined by such factors as how the tones were approached and resolved. A famous example is Wagner's Prelude to the opera *Tristan und Isolde* (Web Example 11.8). The A# in measure 3 is clearly a chromatic passing tone. What, however, are we to make of the first chord of the piece (measure 2)? This chord, because of its notoriety, has come to be known as the "Tristan Chord." It is generally accepted that the chord of measure 2 is actually F - B - D# - A (we will learn about what this chord is, and how it works, in Chapter 24); the G#—which is metrically accented on the downbeat and also sustained for a much longer duration than its resolution—is the dissonance. Fine enough, but then from where is the G# dissonance prepared? A silence? (From the direction of the stems it seems clear that the E at the end of measure 1 is moving to the D#, not the G#, in measure 2.)



Web Example 11.8. Wagner, Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* (piano reduction), mm. 1–11.

Of course, it is impossible to gain a thorough understanding of musical style from just one or two examples from each period. It is essential that you learn as much literature as possible—and not only music composed for your voice or instrument. Only by studying a wide cross-section of composers and genres from a particular period is it possible to gain a working knowledge of the stylistic norms of that era.