

Schubert's Erlkönig

- Goethe's ballad **Erlkönig** was inspired by a true incident of a father who, late at night, rode to a doctor's house in a distant town and, on his arrival there, found his sick son dead in his arms. Schubert set the poem in 1815 at the age of 17.
- The song is renowned for its taxing accompaniment, where the right hand must sustain a repeated triplet rhythm that conveys the intensity of the horse's unrelenting ride.

erdk.un - HWPlayer

File view tools help

Erlkönig (Op.1)

Franz Schubert, lyrics by J.W. von Goethe

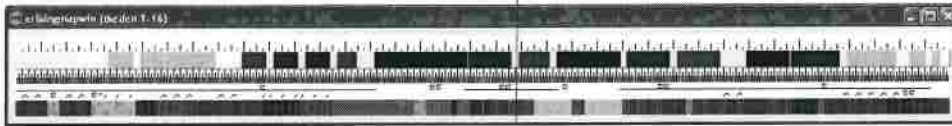
Schnell (Presto)
♩ = 152

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English lyrics by Natalia MacFarren, contributed by Richard Woodroffe

Ready 0:00 / 3:55

A map of Erlkönig, together with a cartoon script version of the ballad

The horse rides in the night ... The child fears shadows ... The Erlkönig entices
The father asks after the child ... he dismisses the fear ... the c. cries out ...



... the f. reassures ... the c. cries in anguish ... the E. compels ... the f. drives the horse ...
... the E. beguiles ... the f. rebuts fear fiercely ... the c. despairs The c. is dead

Making sense for the listener ...

... the Erlkönig story ... the singer's roles ... features of the piano part

Building an artefact using the computer to capture aspects of the song

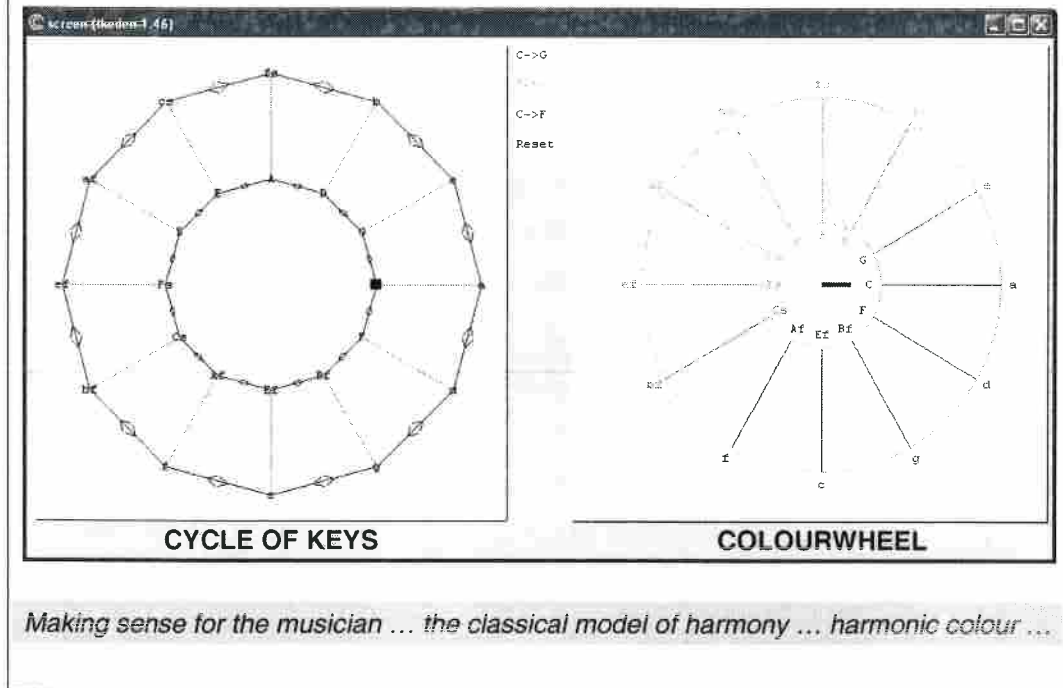
Interactive artefact

Helps to make sense for the listener and for the musician

This slide illustrates sense-making for the listener:

- the story of the ballad
- identify roles of singer, features in accompaniment
- gives an overall sense of the shape of the song

Modelling the classical cycle of keys



Sense-making for the musician ...

-Schubert famous for use of harmony

-- cycle of keys C major “no sharps or flats”

-- add sharps to move anti-clockwise around the cycle

-- add flats to move clockwise

Cycle of keys is associated with a mathematical object – “a group”

-Colourwheel associated colours with the keys by a mathematical formula

-C E A-flat get the primary colours etc

Making sense for the musician ... noticing a harmonic conflict ...

Tonic major-minor ambiguity in Erbkönig

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Erbkönig', starting at measure 27. The score is written for guitar, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music consists of a series of chords, many of which are triads. Above the treble staff, there are four arrows labeled '3' pointing to groups of three notes, indicating triplets. Below the bass staff, there are three arrows labeled '3' pointing to groups of three notes, also indicating triplets. The text 'G major' is written above the treble staff, with an arrow pointing to a specific chord. Below the bass staff, the text 'G minor' is written with an arrow pointing to a chord, and 'G major?' and 'G minor?' are written with arrows pointing to other chords, indicating harmonic ambiguity.

This extract from Erbkönig isn't in the MAJOR or the MINOR ...

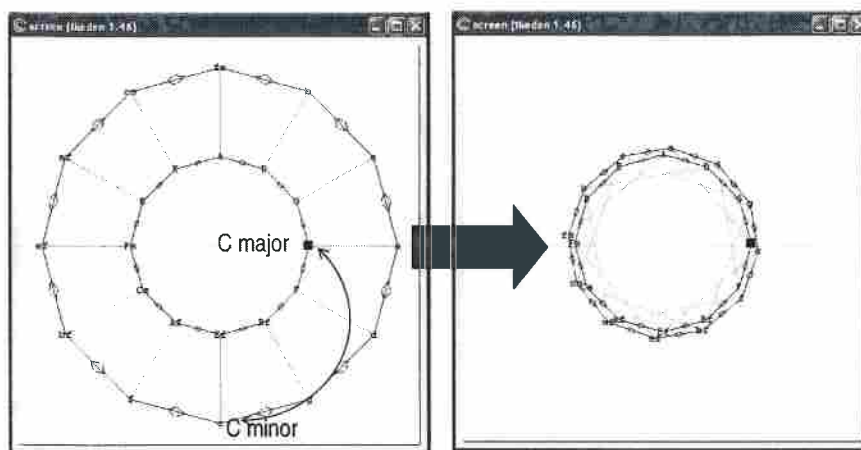
A problem that arises ...

There are passages in the song where the music isn't in the major or the minor key but in a major-minor mixture ...

Can't represent this by a node in the cycle of keys ... doesn't make sense

Making sense for the musician ... resolving the harmonic conflict ...

Modelling major-minor conflation

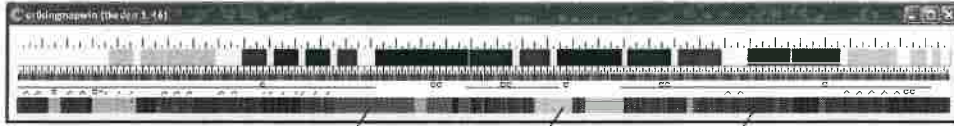


Solution adopted is to map the cycle of keys down to a single ring when this ambiguity arises (applying a "group homomorphism")

Making sense of the major-minor conflation ...

Making sense for the musical analyst ... the expressive role of harmony ...

Harmonic devices illustrated in the map of Erbkönig



The use of major keys in conjunction of the Erbkönig role

The static tonality in the final ride

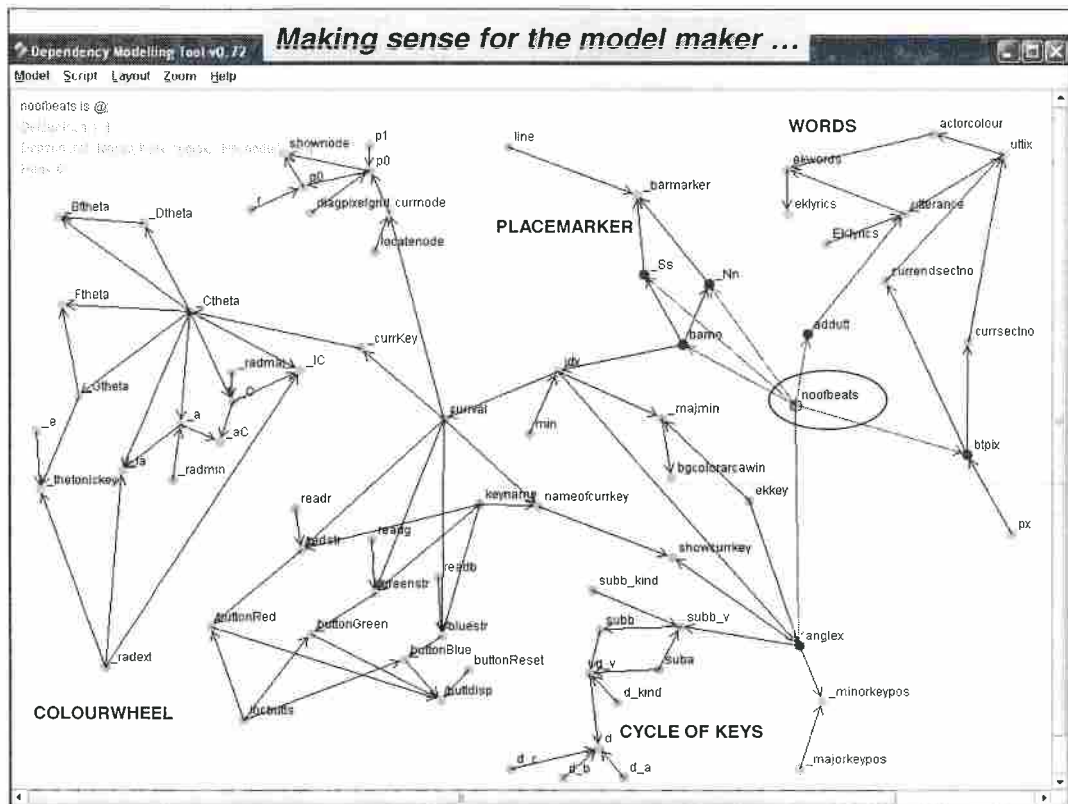
The remote point of arrival

Compare: settings by other composers such as Loewe

the initial lack of explicit minor tonality in the texture

*"He reached his **home** in doubt and dread"*

How the harmonic texture reflects and complements the story of the ballad
Helps to make sense of the story



Sense-making activity has to accompany the construction of the artefact

Uses observables (nodes) and dependencies (edges)

Small subset of the observables, showing what depends on the number of beats elapsed since the beginning of the song (noofbeats circled in 'red').

The orientation of the colourwheel, the state of the cycle of keys, the current role of the singer, the words being displayed, all depend on this observable directly or indirectly, as diagram shows.