

FIVE COMPONENTS OF TONALITY

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In my talk, I will argue that there are five forms of pitch structure that are present in a wide range of musical genres, Western and non-Western, past and present, and which jointly contribute to a sense of tonality:

1. *Conjunct melodic motion*: melodies tend to move by short distances from note to note.
2. *Acoustic consonance*: consonant harmonies are preferred to dissonant harmonies, and tend to be used at points of musical stability.
3. *Harmonic consistency*: the harmonies in a passage of music, whatever they are, tend to be structurally similar to one another.
4. *Macroharmony*: the music tends to use a relatively small number of notes (often between 5 and 7) over moderate spans of musical time.
5. *Centricity*: over moderate time spans, one or more notes is heard as being more stable and important than others, appearing more frequently and serving as the goal of melodic motion.

tonality: which is the most significant, and are there any interesting interactions between them? (For instance, is harmonic consistency more important in the context of some scales than others?) Theoretically, we might ask how the various features can *in principle* be combined. Is it the case, for example, that diatonic music necessarily involves a “tonic” note? Conversely, is chromatic music necessarily non-centric? What sorts of chords can be used to construct contrapuntal music, in which a series of independent melodies articulate structurally similar chords? Finally, we can ask a historical question about how different Western styles have in fact combined and recombined these five ingredients of tonality—treating the five properties as articulating a space of possible tonal musics, and exploring the way previous composers have investigated this space. I will conclude the talk by sketching an alternative history of Western music emphasizing the changing interactions of these five musical features.

My goal is to try to think very broadly about composers can combine these five features to produce interesting tonal effects. This project has empirical, theoretical, and historical components. Empirically, we might ask how each of the five features contributes to listeners’ perceptions of