



Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony and the Triad's Second Nature (Oxford Studies in Music Theory)

By Richard Cohn

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Music theorists have long believed that 19th-century triadic progressions idiomatically extend the diatonic syntax of 18th-century classical tonality, and have accordingly unified the two repertoires under a single mode of representation. Post-structuralist musicologists have challenged this belief, advancing the view that many romantic triadic progressions exceed the reach of classical syntax and are mobilized as the result of a transgressive, anti-syntactic impulse. In *Audacious Euphony*, author Richard Cohn takes both of these views to task, arguing that romantic harmony operates under syntactic principles distinct from those that underlie classical tonality, but no less susceptible to systematic definition. Charting this alternative triadic syntax, Cohn reconceives what consonant triads are, and how they relate to one another. In doing so, he shows that major and minor triads have two distinct natures: one based on their acoustic properties, and the other on their ability to voice-lead smoothly to each other in the chromatic universe. Whereas their acoustic nature underlies the diatonic tonality of the classical tradition, their voice-leading properties are optimized by the pan-triadic progressions characteristic of the 19th century. *Audacious Euphony* develops a set of inter-related maps that organize intuitions about triadic proximity as seen through the lens of voice-leading proximity, using various geometries related to the 19th-century Tonnetz. This model leads to cogent analyses both of particular compositions and of historical trends across the long nineteenth century. Essential reading for music theorists, *Audacious Euphony* is also a valuable resource for music historians, performers and composers.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The culmination of twenty years of thinking about the tonally evasive music of the 19th century, this book is a stunning achievement. The writing is vivid and engaging, the musical close readings are rich and compelling in their detail, and at every turn there is something new to learn about music and musical materials we had thought we already knew well." --Joseph N. Straus, Distinguished Professor, CUNY Graduate Center; Former President, Society for Music Theory

"For sheer virtuosity in theory making and theory-based analysis, *Audacious Euphony* deserves the highest praise. It lights up as never before the universe of triads domesticated in nineteenth-century chromatic music. Were Richard Cohn not already a household name among music theorists, this book would change that." --Kofi Agawu, Professor of Music, Princeton University; Author of *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*

"*Audacious Euphony* synthesizes and extends the influential neo-Riemannian approach to chromatic tonality that Richard Cohn's earlier theoretical work helped develop. Lucid and engagingly written, this book is indispensable reading for music theorists and indeed for anyone deeply interested in 19th-century chromatic harmony." --Fred Lerdahl, Fritz Reiner Professor of Music, Columbia University

"This book is a major contribution to the field of music theory, but Cohn targets not only music theorists but also music historians, conductors, performers, and any interested music listener with a modest level of music-theory training...A companion website presents longer scores, analytical animations, and audio files. Highly recommended." --*Choice*

"*Audacious Euphony*, as the definitive account of one of the most important recent theoretic systems for nineteenth century music, is above all an argument for the essential independence of the logic of chromatic harmony. As such, it will frame the continuing debate about nineteenth-century chromaticism and be an essential reference point for the non-integrationist perspective. It is also necessary reading for anyone interested in nineteenth-century music, reflecting a comprehensive picture of nineteenth-century composers' use of harmony that penetrates deeply into the repertoire. It will become an indispensable source for future research." --*Music Theory Online*

"An important contribution to the field of music theory in general. While many of the essential concepts and analytical tools have been developed in previous scholarship, this book successfully unifies and expands upon these diverse ideas, providing the reader with a theoretically rigorous and historically informed

approach to understanding the complex harmonic innovations of the long nineteenth century." --*Music Research Forum*

About the Author

Richard Cohn is Battell Professor of Music Theory at Yale University. His work on chromatic harmony has been the topic of a series of summer seminars convened by the late John Clough, and has been developed in about a dozen doctoral dissertations, at Chicago, Indiana, Yale, Harvard, and SUNY-Buffalo. His articles have twice earned the Society for Music Theory's Outstanding Publication Award. Cohn edits the Oxford Studies in Music Theory series. In preparation is a general model of meter with applications for European, African, and African-diasporic music, and a co-edited collection on David Lewin's phenomenological writings.

Users Review

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