

A GTTM Analysis of Manolis Kalomiris' «Chant du Soir»

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Abstract

This paper contains the analysis of a small piano piece by Manolis Kalomiris, chief representative of the composers of the Greek National School. Typical of the piece is its modal harmony and the lack of the «tonic» V-I cadence. However, in this analysis, a substitute for this is projected and the time-span reduction and prolongational trees are constructed with the more «stable» notes of the corresponding modes in mind. The result implies the possibility of applying the perceptual analytical model of the Generative Theory of Tonal Music to not strictly tonal pieces, but tonal in a broader way of thinking.

Keywords: music analysis, generative theory, greek national school, Kalomiris

1 Introduction

The piano piece «Chant du Soir» (Nocturne) belongs to a series of easy piano pieces for children entitled «Piano pieces for the Greek children». It is the last composed piece (1949) and was chosen among the other pieces of the collection (many of them strictly tonal or polyphonic) for its modal-chromatic harmony, typical of Greek National School music and its irregular metrical structure (4/4 + 3/4), typical of Greek folk music. In constructing the four elements of the GTTM analysis (metrical structure, grouping structure, time-span reduction and prolongational reduction) certain issues concerning traditional greek music were taken into account and also certain analytical disciplines were borrowed from F. Salzer's «expanded» Schenkerian analytical thought.

2 Metrical Structure

There is a regular metrical structure only at the \downarrow level, which is eventually the tactus of the piece. At the next higher level there is a metrical irregularity since the strong beats are $\downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$, consisting of seven \downarrow in total. At the next level the following structure occurs: $\circ \downarrow$. of again seven \downarrow in total (the dotted half note is maintained at

Δ' Βραδυνò τραγούδι.

IV. Chant du-Soir.

MOLTO CALMO - Πολύ ήσυχα.

p misterioso

p dolce

pp sub.

6

System 1: Treble and bass clefs. Treble clef contains chords and arpeggiated figures. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment. *P dolce* is written in the treble staff.

System 2: Treble and bass clefs. Treble clef contains chords and arpeggiated figures. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment. *P dolce* is written in the treble staff.

System 3: Treble and bass clefs. Treble clef contains chords and arpeggiated figures. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment. *pp.* is written in the treble staff.

System 4: Treble and bass clefs. Treble clef contains chords and arpeggiated figures. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment.

System 5: Treble and bass clefs. Treble clef contains chords and arpeggiated figures. Bass clef contains a simple accompaniment. *pp* is written in the treble staff. *m.d.* and *m.s.* are written in the bass staff.

12
#F#G#A#
#e#d

#F#G#A#
#e#d

Παλιό Φάληρο 25/3/1949.

both metrical levels since it cannot be divided or expanded without destroying the metrical structure). The highest metrical level is the double dotted whole level ∞ .. (seven \downarrow). It doesn't make sense to go any further to even higher metrical levels at such a slow tempo. At this level we find metrical regularity again and it is maintained throughout the piece except for the last four bars where the next to the last strong beat is 11 tactus beats \downarrow (3 bars instead of 2). This metrical irregularity at bar 27 results in making the first beat of bar 28 the next stronger from bar 25 and can be explained in the following terms: the bars 25-27 function as an expansion of the «cadence» that occurs in the preceding bar, so that the enlargement of the metrical span of bars 25-26 simply emphasizes the «plagal cadence» coda character of the last bars of the piece.

3 Grouping Structure

The lowest grouping structure level included in the analysis is level g of the time-span reduction, which roughly splits the musical surface into groups 2 bars long each. Of course there are other minor sub-groups at levels closer to the surface but they are not so important in the TSR, so they are omitted in the graph. These 2-bar groups are organized in larger thematic groups of approximately 4 bars each at the next higher level (TSR level f). The first 4-bar group (bars 1-4) contains the main thematic material in D dorian mode with the «colouring» parallel fifths motion. The next four 4-bar groups (bars 5-20) function as «development» of the main or as workout of subsidiary thematic material with modal progressions or «cadences» to D, A and G (not in progressing order). These four groups also seem to constitute a set of variations (each four bars long) of the thematic material. The next 4-bar group (bars 21-24) carries a slightly varied repetition of the main theme transposed a perfect fifth down to the G dorian mode and the preparation of a modal «cadence» back to D. The last 4-bar group (bars 25-28) contains the return to D as a major chord (bar 25) and a «coda»-functioning prolongation (bars 26-28) with no melodic or motivic content. Advancing to the next higher level (TSR level e) three 8-bar groups are formed, the first two dividing the «development» into 2 sections (bars 5-12 and 13-20) and the third uniting the «reprise» with the «cadence» and the «coda». At the next level (TSR level d) the «development» is united into a larger group, and at the next (TSR level c) only two groups exist: the main theme group and the rest of the piece.

Characteristic is the continuous up-beat grouping structure that appears at almost all the «development» groups. Only the main theme and its repetition have firm down-beat grouping structure.

4 Time-Span Reduction

At all time-span reduction levels there is a clear separation of three melodic lines: the bass line which serves as harmonic-contrapuntal background, the middle one which usually completes the modal harmony and the upper one which functions either as the main melodic line and either as «colour-contrapuntal» line. The upper line is elaborative at bars 1-4 and 21-24, carrying the «static-colouring» perfect 5ths. During

the «development» section it carries the main melodic material, often embellished in various ways (with passing or auxiliary notes, arpeggios, etc).

Time-span reduction analysis starts at the ♩ level (level k in the graph), omitting all the auxiliary ♩ s from the musical surface and continuing at the ♩ level (graph j). The following middle levels (i and h) are two metrically irregular levels between two metrically regular ones (♩ and ♩). At the ♩ level (g) the most important pitches of the modal harmonic structure of the piece are indicated. The following levels are more abstract and demonstrate the modal progressions and the final «cadence». Progressing from the lowest (musical surface) to the highest levels of TSR chromaticism gives way to modality, with the «transition» being demonstrated best at the two middle metrically asymmetric levels i and h. Of course, modality does not exclude chromaticism (*musica ficta*, for instance), but in this certain piece chromaticism occurs mainly as the outcome of continuous interplay between the dorian and phrygian modes of D (that is, mainly the use of either E or Eb and of either B or Bb), even if other chromatic elements coexist (like the Db at bar 11 and the Cb at bar 19) and modality occurs as the common place of the two modes, i.e. the more «stable» common notes D, A, G, C. The most prominent modal element is the G - D (or C - D) modal cadence at bars 21-25. Other important modal elements are the «half-cadence» type progression to A (minor dominant) at bar 12 and the progression to G (minor subdominant) at bars 17-19.

Determining the most «stable» (structurally more important) events from each level in order to construct the next one, I have taken into consideration the modal character of the piece, so I considered more important the notes with the greater pitch stability in the current modes, i.e. dorian and phrygian modes of D (only as pitch collections, since little resemblance exists between the gregorian modes bearing these names with the Greek folk modal scales which function as source for this music). (Themelis, 1972; Spyridakis-Peristeris, 1968)

The main problem in the time-span (and consequently prolongational) reduction of this music is what really constitutes a cadence. This problem has to be addressed at bars 21-24, just prior to the final conclusion to D at bar 25. Two possible solutions are provided:

a) the main cadence is a modal «plagal» cadence from the modal G (bar 21) to D (bar 25). In this version the D-A chord is chosen for bar 24 at levels i and h of the TSR. However it is considered an elaboration of the preceding G chord at bar 23 (anticipation) at level g, giving way to the G-D chord at bar 23. At even higher level the G-D at bar 23 is subordinate to the G-D at bar 21 since it starts a 4-bar group and brings back the main theme of the piece.

b) the main cadence is the modal subtonic - tonic progression C - D that occurs as horizontal progression just prior to the final D major chord at both the bassline and the upper line. Here, the C in the upper line on the last beat of bar 24 can be considered an arpeggiation of the modal chord C-G taking place on the last beat of bar 23 in the bass and middle lines and the bass line D-E-F at bar 24 (level j) can be considered an anticipation. So, the C-G chord is chosen for bar 24 at levels i and upwards of the TSR.

Both versions' time-span reductions have been included in the paper (figures 1 and 2) since they both make sense as possible harmonic interpretations of the modal

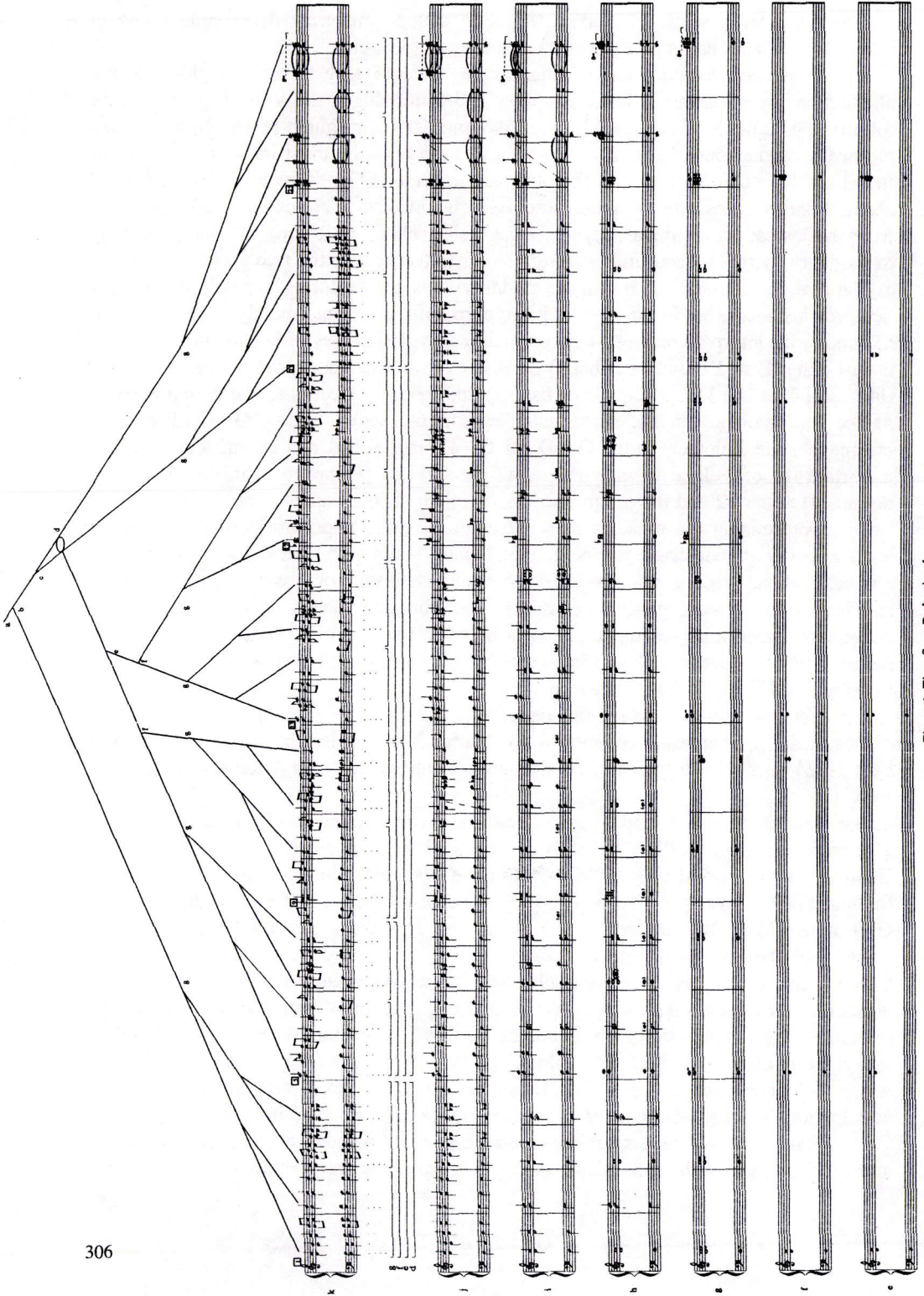


Figure 1: Time-Span Reduction 1

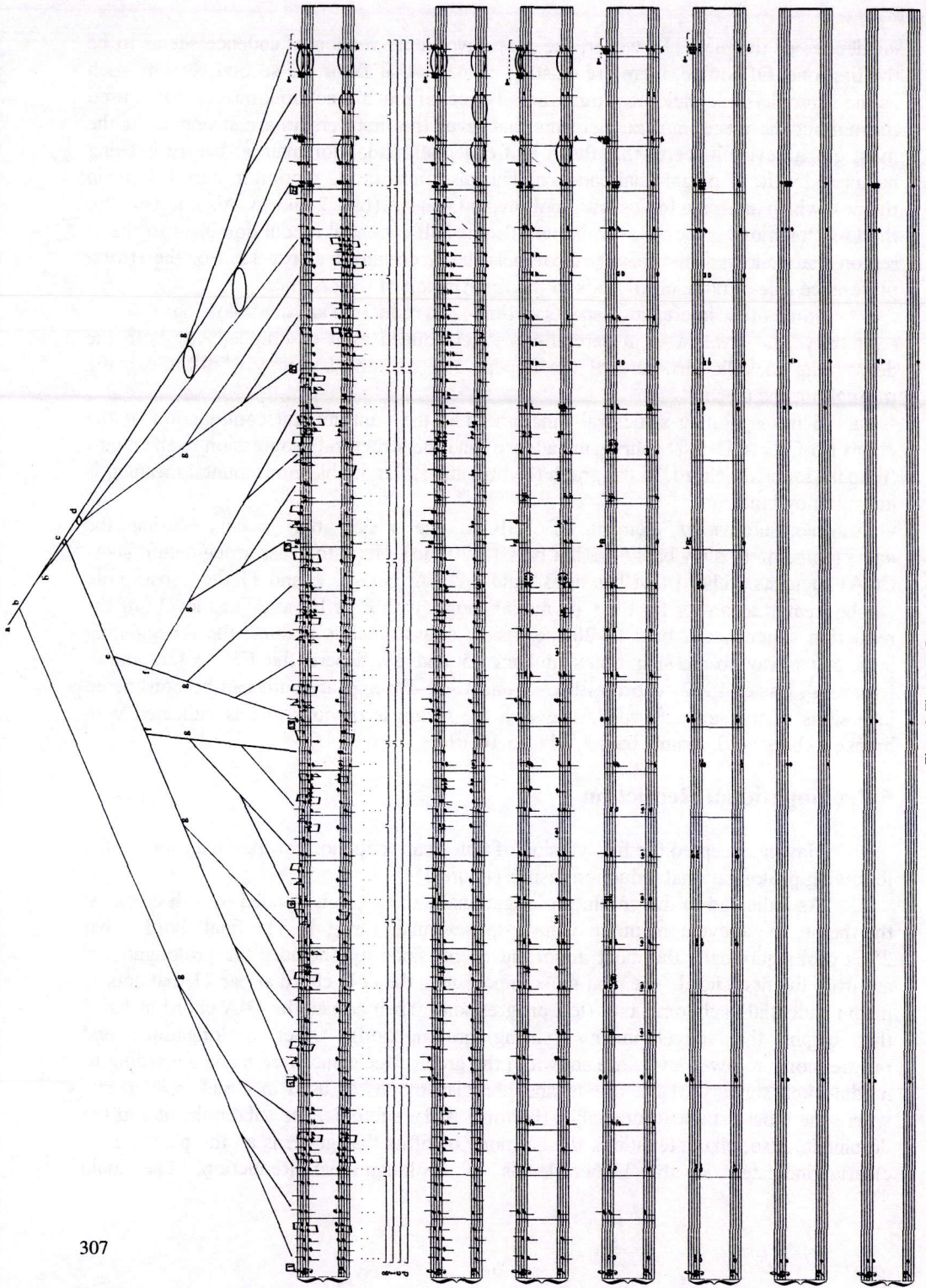


Figure 2: Time-Span Reduction 2

«cadence» of the piece. However, the most favourable version of cadence seems to be the first one. Of course, there are existing elements that favor the second version, such as the subtonic-tonic melodic progression, typical of much greek folk music, that is used throughout the piece, but the elements that favor the first version are stronger: At the most global levels it seems that the A half-cadential modal dominant at bar 12 is being balanced by the G plagal final cadence. This also mirrors the motion at bars 1-4 (main theme), which alternate tonics with motions to G and A (bars 2 and 4). Also, at bars 20, the D-A functions not only as tonic but also as half-cadential modal dominant to the G region that follows; thus this D-A parallels the A dominant at bar 12. So, the strong preference rule of parallelism leads to the first version of the cadence.

Some other interesting aspects of time-span reduction are the following:

- At bar 7 (♩ level) a G in parenthesis is introduced as it is «implied» by both the descending melodic structure of the upper voice and the harmony of fifths existing throughout the piece.
- Bar 16 has a double structural function: It is the contrapuntal continuation of the chord Eb-C-G to D-A-D (phrygian cadence) and the structural progression to the minor (modal) dominant chord. In the graph (levels j and i) the double contrapuntal meaning is indicated by brackets.
- Another interesting element of TSR is the fusion that occurs during the «development» (mainly bars 5-12 but bars 13-20 too). Here, the bass arpeggiation D-A-C(-A) suggests a chord that has no 3rd and a 7th. At bars 7, 9, and 11 the C bass note can be treated as a root for the C-G modal chord (with E or Eb as 3rd) as level i of the reduction suggests. At bars 13-20 the fusion is less obvious because the arpeggiating bass gives way to passing notes at bars 15 and 19, where the CS (contrapuntal-structural, Salzer 1962) chords Eb-C-G and G-Eb-Bb appear (both can be considered inversions of the same chord). At level h the fusion is obvious and is indicated with brackets (bars 5-20, mainly bars 7,9,11,15,16,19).

5 Prolongational Reduction

Having accepted the first version of time-span reduction for the final cadence the following prolongational reduction results (figure 3).

As indicated in the graph, prolongationally the piece is divided into three parts: the theme, the «development» and the «reprise»-finale (level d). The final chord at bar 25 is prolongationally the most important event, since it concludes the prolongational arc from the first chord. The next most important is the G-D chord at bar 21 that acts as plagal cadential «subdominant» (left progression). Then comes the D-A chord at bar 5 that begins the «development» (strong prolongation). Other prolongations and progressions at lower levels are shown in the graph. Decisions were made according to modal pitch stability of the dorian and phrygian modes as used in Greek folk music, where the most «stable» notes after the tonic is the subtonic, the subdominant and the dominant. Also, characteristic is the harmony of fifths that governs all the piece and is clearly indicated at the higher levels of Prolongational Reduction. The main

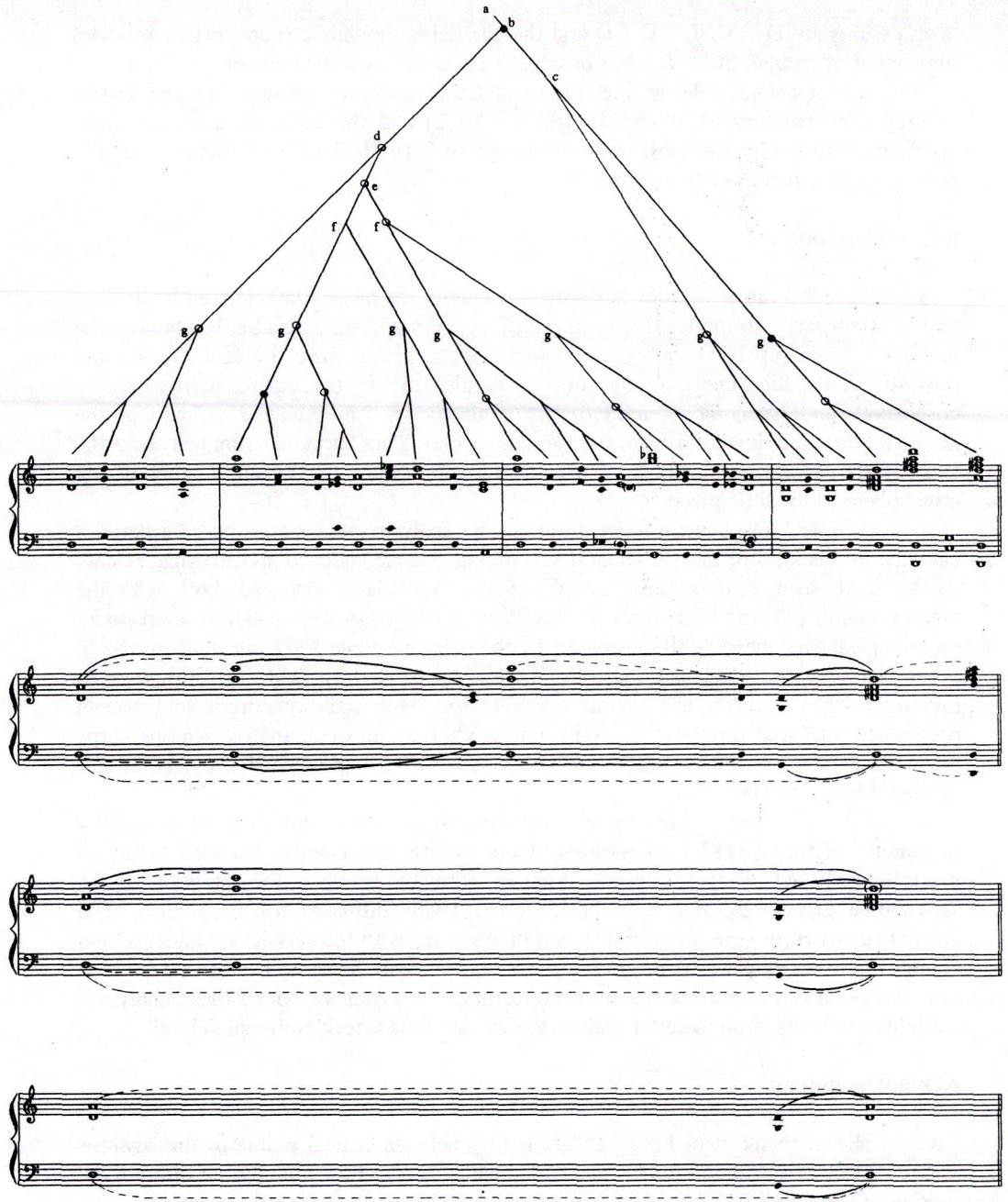



Figure 3. Prolongational Reduction

progressions are D - A - D - G - D and the parallel homophonic (quasi organum-style) movement of parallel fifths can be considered as «colouring» the main progression.

An important role in the prolongational reduction is held by the modal contrapuntal-structural (CS) chords, (Salzer, 1962) and the main harmonic structure «projected» to the listener is the modal harmony of D (with G and A as modal cadential points) embellished by chromaticism.

6 Conclusions

There is a rather «static» harmony throughout the piece characterized by the mix of D dorian-phrygian modes. Little deviation appears and only at TSR levels near the musical surface (up to j) internal movement occurs. From level i (level ) and upwards static fifth chords stand out at regular metric time-spans narrowing the complexity and harmonic breadth of the composition. This analysis points out the minimal harmonic deviation from the tonic D-A chord, its harmonic simplicity and the lack of the «surprise» element. These factors contribute to the static «nocturnal» atmosphere of the little piece.

An interesting question arises out of this analysis: what could be considered a cadence in this kind of music? Does it function as a tonic cadence and to what extent? As we have seen, two possible modal cadence types have emerged, both with the corresponding TSR (and PR) trees. In this instance, the plagal G-D cadence seems to be more logical and meaningful compared to the subtonic-tonic C-D one, but maybe in other pieces of the greek national school these terms are reversed. The only way to investigate these aspects is to come up with firm pitch stability criteria and special preference rules that apply to this kind of music after a number of analyses and perhaps after the utilization of psychoacoustic experiments with experienced listeners of this music (Dibben, 1994).

The conclusion concerning the method applied for the analysis is the possibility of validity of the GTTM methodology at non strictly tonal music but also to modal music embellished by chromaticism. What is more interesting is the retention of the «normative structure» and the «basic form» (with different tonal content). The normative structure here, of course, has nothing to do with the classic V-I cadence and is built upon the modal IV-I progression. Of course, more analyses have to be made in order to point out certain conclusions concerning the extent to which these analytical methods can be used on material such as the music of the Greek National School.

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