

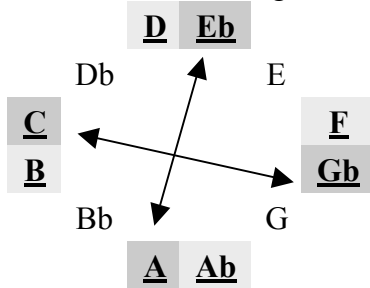
Pitch Axes in “Diminished Fifth” by Bartók

By Mark Fezell, Ph.D.

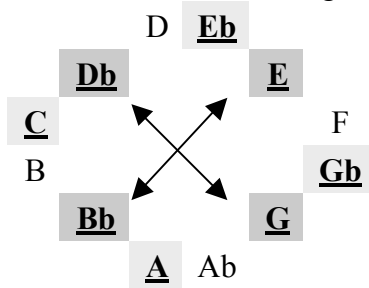
Inspiration for parts of this thought process: Lendvai, Antokoletz

Also <http://music.uncg.edu/MkSets/html/dim5th1.html>

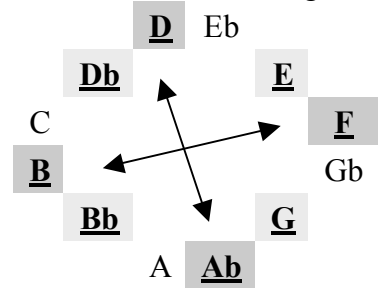
“Tonic” Axis Arrangement



“Subdominant” Axis Arrangement



“Dominant” Axis Arrangement



Form	A		B		A'	B'	Retrans.	A''	CODA
Mm.	1-5	6-11	12-15	16-19	20-25	26-32	33-34	35-41	42-44
Length	5 mm.	6 mm.	4 mm.	4 mm.	6 mm.	7 mm.	2 mm.	7 mm.	3 mm.
RH	X	X/y@11	Y	Y	X	Y/sequence		X	Y
LH	X	X	Y	Y	X	X/reordered		X/Y@41	Y
Axis	TONIC	TONIC	SUBD	SUBD	TONIC	DOM/SUB		TONIC	SUB, then TONIC
RH voices (S-A)	D A	Ab Eb	Gb Db	Eb Bb	D A	Bb-Ab-Gb-Eb F -Eb- Db-Bb	Eb Bb	D A	C [D] G A
LH voices (T-B)	Ab Eb	D A	C G	A E	Ab Eb	E - D -C -A B - A - G-E	A E	Ab Eb	Gb [Bb] Db Eb

KEY: X=[0235], e.g. EbFGbAb | Y=[025], e.g. [EbFAB]

Notes from Dr. Fezell:

- The A section uses the x motive, and the B section uses Y.
- There are essentially 4 functional voices in the texture. The S and T are a tritone apart, as are the A and B.
- The use of voice exchanges (SA becoming TB and vice-versa) cleverly hides the voice leading. The Y motive [025] becomes an architectonic organizing motive: it is significant at the surface level, but also connects the three phrases beginning at mm. 6, 12, and 16. Hence, for instance, in 6-19 the S voice states Ab-Gb-Eb (= [025]), the A states Eb-Db-Bb (= [025]), the T states D-C-A (= [025]), and the B states A-G-E (= [025]).
- Measures 29-34 are an abbreviated restatement of 6-19.
- Measures 35-43 begin the same pattern as 6-19 outlined above, but the pattern breaks to end on the “tonic” sonority. For instance, the B has Eb-Db-...Eb at the end of the piece instead of Eb-Db-...Bb as in the first section.
- The dominant axis (B octatonic, illustration above) is withheld until the second B section.