

# Schubert's lament: Original reading

**J. Miguel Ribeiro-Pereira**

Superior School of Music, Porto Polytechnic Institute, Portugal

The *topos* of lament is expressed upon the idiosyncratic leading-tone polarity of the minor mode (scale degrees 5-*b*6-5). I have traced both its evolving manifestations and critical significance in tonal music, syntactic as well as systemic, from Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* to Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*. A new cognitive model was put forth therein, that is based on the paradigm of harmonic modulation as an essentially plastic process. Following Beethoven's lead, Schubert developed a consistent chromatic approach to the mixture of modes (major-minor parallel keys). In his lieder, particularly, he was to cast and coin the old lament-motive tradition in the context of the early-Romantic aesthetics, while further extending the critical role of the flat-submediant region and the attendant major-third relationship (I/I-*b*VI). The present study attempts to explain how Schubert's musical interpretations (or readings) of Rückert's "Du bist die Ruh" and "Lachen und weinen" aptly represent, and actually enhance, the core meaning of the poems. Of course, the paradigm of harmonic modulation will be applied thereto. The qualifier "original" in the title has a twofold meaning: it denotes a novel analytical approach to the composer's settings; these, in turn, were the source of (or role model for) subsequent developments.

*Keywords:* analysis; flat-submediant region; harmonic modulation; lament-motive; lied

## **Address for correspondence**

J. Miguel Ribeiro-Pereira, Escola Superior de Musica (ESMAE-IPP), Rua de Alegria 504, 4200 Porto, Portugal; *Email:* miguel-rp@clix.pt