

*Section 5.8***HARMONIC ANALYSIS 2:
POLYPHONIC TEXTURE**

**Menuet
from French
Suite No. 2 by
J.S. Bach**

Polyphonic textures (as well as monophonic textures) can seem very difficult to analyze harmonically. To illustrate the process of polyphonic analysis, this section focuses on the first four full measures of the Menuet from the second French Suite of J.S. Bach.

Key of c minor

The key is c minor. In minor keys, the leading tone (here, B natural) requires an accidental, so it is easy to spot. The first two notes in the right hand are an example of a compound line. In a **compound line**, one melody states two different notes of the chord. It is very common to start with tonic, and the most obvious analysis of the first measure is all tonic:

Compound line

**Measure 1 as a
single harmony**

**Measure 1 with a
second inversion
chord**

Polyphony using only two melodies often works by implying standard harmonic progressions, including second inversion chord patterns (see 5.7). Notice how the bass line moves up by step, covering a third from C up to E flat. If there is a voice exchange (as here), this can imply a passing *6³* pattern.

**Measure 2
harmonic
analysis**

At first glance, measure 2 also seems to make sense as a single harmony. In this case, the B natural leading tone in beat 3 of measure 2 resolving up to tonic in measure 3 changes the harmonic meaning. The **leading tone** is a very strong scale step harmonically. When it moves up by step to tonic in the next chord, the chord with the leading tone usually functions as a dominant or leading tone chord.

FA \flat CE \flat

C: iv iv $_2^4$ iv $_4^6$

C: iv iv $_2^4$ vii $^{\circ}$

iv iv $_2^4$ vii $^{\circ}$ iv iv $_2^4$ vii $^{\circ}$

...minus the left hand C ...implies

**Measures 3 to 5
harmonic
analysis**

Below is a complete harmonic analysis of measures 1 through 5. Measure 3 contains only one nonchord tone; in beats 2 and 3 the fifth is the missing chord member, as expected. The logic applied to measure 1 does not work for measure 4. Since the A has a natural, it makes more sense as a passing tone than as a second inversion chord. In measures 1 and 2, the C passing tone pushes the D and B natural chord tones “out of alignment” with the beat.

C: i V $_4^6$ i 6 iv iv $_2^4$ vii $^{\circ}$

i iv $_5^6$ ii $_5^{\circ}$ V V 6 i