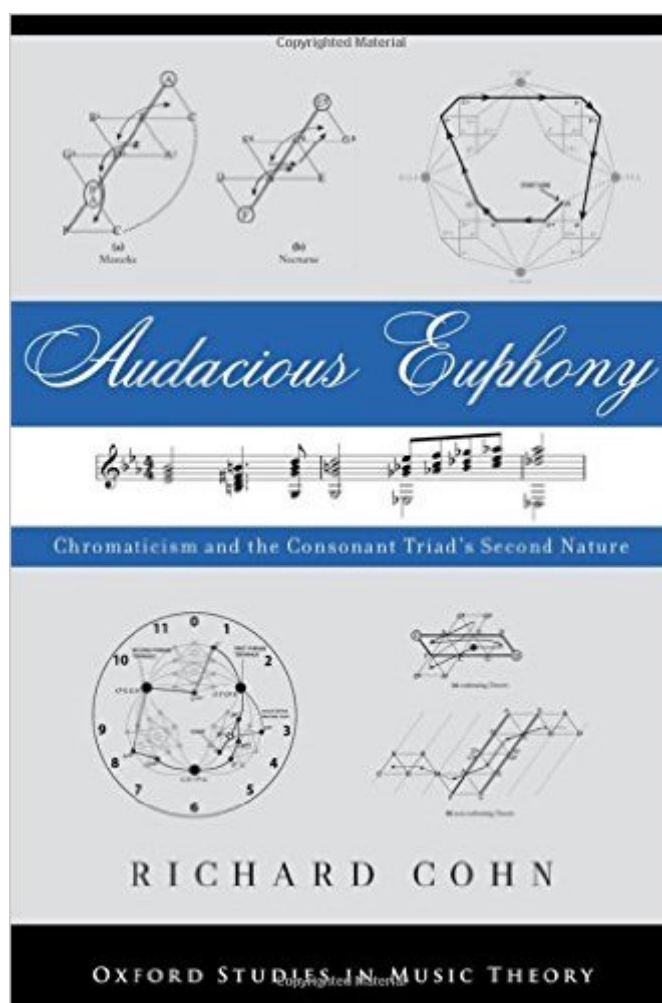# Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony And The Triad's Second Nature (Oxford Studies In Music Theory)

Synopsis

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 repertories 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.

Book Information

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (5 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I got this book because I wanted to learn about the next level of music theory and had heard about Cohn from my professor at the time. When I completed my formal study of classical music theory, it left me wondering what else there was to learn, because there were so many different techniques and sounds that only got glossed over by classical harmony as either 'coloristic' chord progressions or endless tonicizations. I think this strictly tonal idea of music is probably influenced a lot by Schenker, and there are aspects of it that have become outdated. Jazz theory, on the other hand, is to a large degree about finding the right scale and chord tones to improvise over any chord and thus largely based on practice and practical application.This book is totally different. It takes what you know about harmony and flips it on its head, in the greatest way possible. If you've never read anything by Cohn or don't know about the Tonnetz, then you are in for a wild ride! While the writing is extremely academic and at times I found myself looking up a word every couple of pages, the tone of the writing is pleasant and fun. There is no snobbery here; he is simply laying down every discovery that he has made about a different way that triads can relate to each other. Also, as he says, you only need to have a very basic understanding of theory to understand what he is explaining here. There are moments when the sentences get dense with information but once you take it in slowly for a second time you will probably understand it. I think that having a background in music theory sometimes slowed me down because he explains things in a new way.

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