

Functional Harmony

Harmony is the science of notes and chords and how they relate to each other.

Functional harmony is the use of chords for specific musical intentions.

Musical progressions are, at their most basic, a movement between the tonal centre (the sound of home and resolution), and the 5th degree of the scale (departure and tension).

The tonic/dominant relationship is fundamental to western music. Every progression can be seen as moving from I to V and back to I. Various other chords may be used during the progression but the basic framework of I, V, I, remains integral.

For example, a chord progression might set the tonal scene with the tonic chord (I), then move away to the subdominant (IV). This prepares it for the dominant (V), the tension of which is uncomfortable to hear and begs to resolve back to the tonic (I).

This can be elongated for as long as the composer wishes, using any of the other chords which all have different qualities evoking various effects.

