

CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC MUSIC: ORIGINS, HARMONIC PROCESS, AND THE  
LEADING-REFRAIN FORM

by

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*-Dedicated to Grannie Mum and Pappy-  
-whose love I received formed me into who I am today-  
-You are both greatly missed-*

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## ABSTRACT

In 1962, the Second Ecumenical of the Vatican (known as Vatican II) began a series of liturgical reforms that presently affect modern day Catholic worship. The Vatican II reforms ushered in a new sacred musical style known as Contemporary Catholic Music (CCM), which incorporates traditional/secular styles (e.g., gospel, folk, etc.). The present study provides the origins of CCM, analyzes the harmonic processes found within CCM using Harrisonian scale-degree theory, and details the harmonic and formal process of leading-refrain form.

## CHAPTER I: ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC MUSIC

### *Introduction*

Contemporary Catholic Music (CCM) is a form of Catholic sacred music that originates from the reforms of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (popularly referred to as Vatican II).<sup>1</sup> Today, it eclectically derives musical elements—instrumentation, harmonic progressions, and song form—from traditional and popular music genres such as modern rock, Spanish, gospel, and folk music. The label CCM is appropriate to these songs because of their Catholic lyrical content, song form, and function in Roman Catholic liturgies (whether or not they were intended so to function).

When bishops began to implement the decrees of Vatican II, few CCM songs existed, because church documents preceding Vatican II restricted the use of vernacular-based traditional religious music in Roman Catholic liturgies until shortly before Vatican II. I use the term “proto-CCM” to describe vernacular religious songs preceding Vatican II (e.g., four-part vernacular hymns such as “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name”). Despite their differences, both CCM and proto-CCM represent approved forms of music that differ from the three valid forms of Catholic sacred music originally identified by Pope Saint Pius X in the 1903 motu proprio *Tra le sollecitudini*: Gregorian chant, polyphony (of Palestrina), and modern music (appropriately styled from tonal Western art music).<sup>2</sup>

This study sets out to investigate the harmonic and formal procedures of CCM. It shows that CCM uses a wide range of harmonic and voice-leading procedures that derive influence from contemporaneous traditional/secular music. Further, the harmonic procedures of CCM

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<sup>1</sup> Held from October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1962 to December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> *Tra le sollecitudini*, Art. 3–5.

songs give rise to a song form that is nearly exclusive to CCM: leading-refrain form. However, before delving into CCM's musical elements, this study historically positions CCM by detailing the musical permissions from church documents of various binding power (e.g., motu proprio, encyclicals, constitutions, etc.) that directly lead to the development of CCM.

### *Prefacing the Nature of Liturgical Reforms*

Though liturgical reforms may appear to usher in new ideas, reforms should be understood as connected to pre-reform teachings and concepts; in other words, “new” reforms are not entirely new. For instance, Robert Burns states that Vatican II consisted of “compromise agreements and contain a mixture of new and more traditional ideas” while also noting that “none of the teachings of Vatican II are completely ‘new.’”<sup>3</sup> For example, the concept of “active participation,” though tightly associated with Vatican II, occurs in preceding papal documents (see especially Pope Saint Pius X's moto proprio *Tra le sollecitudini* and Pope Venerable Pius XII's twelfth encyclical *Mediator Dei*); its association with Vatican II stems from a “deeper understanding of existing teachings,” perhaps bringing “to light ideas that simply were not operative facets of contemporary Catholicism.”<sup>4</sup> The same underlying principle applies to sacred music, as the following sections of this chapter explores.

### *Musical Reforms Leading to Vatican II*

Though Vatican II's implementation in the United States (November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1964) marks the formal beginning of CCM's development, the 1903 motu proprio *Tra le sollecitudini* (TLS) of Pope Saint Pius X initiated a series of musical reforms leading to Vatican II. TLS itself was

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Burns, *Roman Catholicism: Yesterday and Today* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

largely a culmination of regional documents produced by Pope Saint Pius X during his pre-papacy tenures as a bishop, patriarch, and cardinal under the name Giuseppe Sarto. The Synodal Decree of Mantua (1888) and the Pastoral Letter of Venice (1895), as Robert Hayburn highlights, contain similar passages to the TLS. For instance, all three documents prohibit women from singing in choirs, set strict conditional usage of “bands,” and champion Gregorian chant as the highest form of sacred music.<sup>5</sup> TLS further forbid the piano, cymbals, kettledrums, and (implicitly) guitars, among other instruments.<sup>6</sup>

The wording of the pre-papacy Votum of 1893 (as Cardinal-Patriarch Sarto) is nearly identical to that of the TLS.<sup>7</sup> Both outline three forms of valid sacred music (Gregorian chant, polyphony, and modern music), prohibit women from singing in choirs, reaffirm Latin as the exclusive sacred language for singing, and regulate the use of instruments (such as permitting the use of organ and forbidding the use of piano), among other rules. In essence, all the documents presented thus far manifested “the desires of the Pope himself” (**Figure 1.1**).<sup>8</sup>

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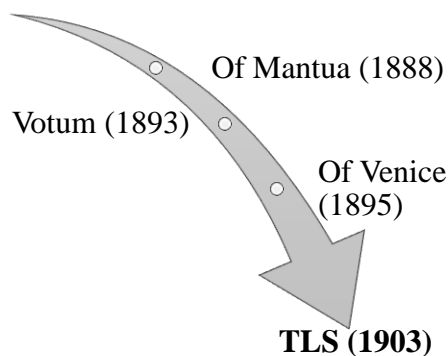
<sup>5</sup> Robert F. Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music: 95 A.D. to 1977 A.D.* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 220–222.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 228–229.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 223–231.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

**Figure 1.1** – Documents leading to *Tra le sollecitudini*



Though TLS makes no direct mention of any form of proto-CCM, its section on liturgical text forbidding singing in the vernacular dismisses any form of proto-CCM since the latter would use the vernacular. However, succeeding papal documents that extend TLS slowly became more accepting of proto-CCM.

At least two other papal documents heavily reinforce the musical reforms found in TLS: *Divini cultus sanctitatem* of Pope Pius XI (DCS) and *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII (MD). DCS acknowledged the incomplete implementation of the TLS, reiterated its key points, and provided “more exact rules for teaching sacred music in seminaries.”<sup>9</sup> MD reiterated content from TLS and DCS but with optimistic language encouraging active participation in the liturgy as a whole. It also acts as a kind of mediator between TLS and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of Vatican II (SC) in that MD’s emphasis on active participation supplements TLS’s passing mention of participation, but still not to the great extent found in SC.

MD’s significant fostering of active participation likely influenced Pope Pius XII’s later encyclical *Musicae sacre disciplina* (MSD). MSD marks a milestone in sacred music reform by

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<sup>9</sup> Hayburn, 327.

recognizing another form of sacred music (in addition to Gregorian chant, polyphony, and modern music), “popular religious hymns” or proto-CCM.<sup>10</sup> Though only used under the condition of the Holy See’s permission or when the Mass was not solemnly sung, the permitted use of proto-CCM in the sacred liturgy provided a vernacular-based mode of musical worship that served as a “powerful aid in keeping the faithful from attending the Holy Sacrifice like dumb and idle spectators.”<sup>11</sup> Jan Michael Joncas states, “It is clear, however, that MSD does not consider such vernacular singing as genuinely liturgical music, but as popular devotional singing *coordinated with* the liturgical action.”<sup>12</sup> Consequently, when more essential liturgical elements are only recited in the mass, vernacular singing gives “undue prominence in congregational songs.”<sup>13</sup>

The final significant music-dedicated document before Vatican II, *Instructio de musica sacra et liturgia* of 1958, expanded the Church’s regard for “popular religious singing,” defining it as song “which springs spontaneously from that religious sentiment with which human beings have been endowed by the Creator himself.”<sup>14</sup> Joncas details three important consequences of this definition: 1) “culture-specific religious music is no longer limited to hymns” in that the definition “recognizes that there are cultures which produce popular religious singing that does not fit the European model of hymnody”; 2) religious singing does not exclusively arise from liturgical chant (as MSD asserted); and 3) the shifting of the term “universal” in terms of “human

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<sup>10</sup> Jan Michael Joncas, *From Sacred Song to Ritual Music: Twentieth-Century Understandings of Roman Catholic Worship Music* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Musicae sacre*, Art. 64.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>14</sup> *De music sacra et sacra liturgia*, Article 9.

instinct” rather than a “particular repertoire of music (Gregorian chant).”<sup>15</sup> Overall, the document significantly raises the status of proto-CCM, thus anticipating the reforms of Vatican II.

In summary, the above documents show a trend toward the acceptance of proto-CCM, ultimately setting the stage for CCM’s arrival with the implementation of Vatican II. The documents do not diminish the importance of Gregorian chant, polyphony, and modern music (i.e., Western art music); rather, they retain the importance of these musical styles while ushering in another valid form of sacred music, proto-CCM.

### *Vatican II: Initiating CCM*

Vatican II shaped the liturgical practices and norms of the present Roman Catholic liturgy, providing greater accessibility to the Roman Catholic Mass for the world’s people. As stated above, Vatican II marks the shift to the permitted use of vernacular languages during the Mass; but more central to the present study, Vatican II incorporates significant musical reforms that directly led to the development of a new sacred music style, CCM. Vatican II’s *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), the principal Vatican II document pertaining to sacred music, conditionally permits the use of instruments other than organ (e.g., the acoustic guitar), acknowledges cultural diversity within sacred music (such as in “mission lands”), and encourages composers to compose new music for the needs of large choirs, small choirs, and (crucially) the faithful assembly for good active participation.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, these reforms significantly alter the sacred music of the Roman Catholic liturgy, especially with varied interpretations of the aforementioned reforms.

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<sup>15</sup> Joncas, 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Art. 119-121.

As we have seen, though the Vatican II reforms modernized Roman Catholic liturgy, they were inspired by earlier documents of the Catholic Church. Therefore, in essence, Vatican II preserved aspects of pre-Vatican II liturgical ideas and norms while also ushering in newer approaches based on pre-Vatican II principles (as Robert Burns indicated above).

*Vatican II's Sacrosanctum Concilium*

With Vatican II reforms beginning in the United States on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1964, significant liturgical reforms offered worshippers more opportunities than ever before to actively participate in the Catholic liturgy; instead of watching Mass happen as “dumb and idle spectators,” the congregation was invited to partake in the celebration of the Mass.<sup>17</sup> On the musical side, the Vatican II constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) outlined new reforms pertaining to music while also maintaining the views of TLS, MD, and other documents. For instance, SC continued to champion Gregorian chant as “specially suited to the Roman liturgy,” but also stated that “other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action, as laid down in Art. 30.” The reference to SC–30, which emphasized the active participation of the people, reflects the desire of the Church to include “the people” in the Roman Catholic liturgy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Musicae Sacrae*, Article 64.

<sup>18</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Article 116.

But importantly, SC's 118–121 are dedicated to expanding sacred music for the Roman Catholic liturgy. For instance, SC–119 states:

In certain parts of the world, especially mission lands, there are peoples who have their own musical traditions, and these play a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason due importance is to be attached to their music, and a suitable place is to be given to it, not only in forming their attitude toward religion, but also in adapting worship to their native genius....

Therefore, when missionaries are being given training in music, every effort should be made to see that they become competent in promoting the traditional music of these peoples, both in schools and in sacred services, as far as may be practicable.

Article 119, in short, permits peoples' musical traditions as valid sacred music in worship.

However, “traditional music” is never exactly defined (nor “certain parts of the world”), but it is important to understand that both include music in a person's “religious and social life.” In the broadest interpretation, “certain parts of the world” would include every part of the world that has musical traditions (virtually everywhere) and would be tied to “religious and social life.” In fact, this seems to be the case for the United States (US). The US, at the time of the promulgation of SC in 1963, had much “traditional music” of a religious nature in the form of spirituals (e.g., “Were You There,” “Wade in the Water,” “Every Time I Feel the Spirit,” etc.) as well as folk-adjacent songs (e.g., Bob Ferguson's “Wings of a Dove,” Bill Monroe's “Lord, Protect My Soul,” the unattributed “What Wondrous Love,” etc.). If the US constitutes a “certain part of the world,” the “traditional music” of the people must have “suitable place” in worship in its adapted form.

Of course, not all folk/spiritual music would be suitable for the sacred liturgy. For instance, Sydney Carter's folk-tune setting of “The Lord of the Dance” includes a doctrinal error that attributes complete, collective responsibility for Christ's death to the Jewish people (Verse 3: “The Holy People said it was a shame”); Catholic doctrine attributes Christ's death to all

sinners.<sup>19</sup> To this end, “texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine; indeed they should be drawn chiefly from holy scripture and from liturgical sources.”<sup>20</sup>

Further, with the permission of “traditional music,” traditional musical instruments were also ushered in conditionally. SC–120 states:

In the Latin Church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendor to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man's mind to God and to higher things.

But other instruments also may be admitted for use in divine worship, with the knowledge and consent of the competent territorial authority, as laid down in Art. 22, 52, 37, and 40. This may be done, however, only on condition that the instruments are suitable, or can be made suitable, for sacred use, accord with the dignity of the temple, and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful.

Other than the organ, the two most common instruments that support much of today's Catholic liturgical music are piano (or electric keyboard) and acoustic guitar, the latter having more ties to folk music. However, synthesizers, electric guitars (and various effects), drum kits, and so forth have found their way into the sacred liturgy, albeit controversially. Naturally, the introduction of these new timbres, and styles associated with these timbres, gave rise to new liturgical composition; for instance, the use of guitar at the beginning of CCM led to the import of styles associated with guitar, such as the blues style (Fr. Peter Scholtes' “They'll Know We Are Christians”), Mariachi style (Bob Hurd's and Pia Moriarty's “Pan de Vida”), modern folk style (Sarah Hart's “The Body of Christ”), and even funk-inflected rock (Steve Angrisano's and Tom Tomazek's “Go Make a Difference”).

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<sup>19</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, “Catholic Hymnody at the Church: An Aid for Evaluating Hymn Lyrics”, 2020, 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Article 121.

### *Defining CCM*

With the SC permitting the use of “traditional music” and other instruments in addition to the organ, all parties (priests, bishops, musicians, etc.) had an opportunity to expand the definition of sacred music. CCM is characterized by 1) its use of a variety of instruments depending on style and period (e.g., guitar in 1960–70s folk-styles), 2) its use of vernacular texts (of various sourcing), and 3) its relation to musical styles present in culture in the past and now (to a degree). Provided below is a table including a few songs to demonstrate CCM’s broad range of styles (**Table 1.1**).

**Table 1.1** – Range of styles within CCM

Song	“God is Love”	“Blest Be the Lord”	“O Love of God/Amor de Dios”	“In Every Age”	“The Feast Meant for Everyone”
Composer	Fr. Clarence Rivers	Dan Schutte	Bob Hurd and Pia Moriarty	Janèt Sullivan Whitaker	Sarah Hart and Tom Booth
Year	1964	1976	1994	1998	2019
Style	Spiritual	Folk-rock	Hispanic Folk	Folk-Pop	Contemporary Folk
Instrumentation	A cappella	Guitar, voice/chorus	Guitar, voice/chorus, flute, auxiliary percussion	Piano, voice/chorus, auxiliary instruments	Piano, guitar (background) voice/chorus, drums
Text Source	Scriptural	Scriptural	Original	Scriptural	Original

Despite SC’s marking the formal beginning of CCM, little CCM repertoire yet existed for the Church. Only when new, folk-based instrumentation was incorporated in masses did new music flow from the styles associated with those instruments (e.g., the various folk styles associated with the acoustic guitar); in other words, SC permitted the incorporation of new instruments and styles, but it was up to composers to make CCM a reality. Canedo provides insight to the initial issues of incorporating CCM in the liturgy, stating, “parish folk choirs had

no choice but to rely on secular sources to keep their weekly repertoire fresh.”<sup>21</sup> To this end, secular songs in their literal and liturgical parody forms supported some of these liturgies; in fact, Canedo further cites the existence of the anonymously “published” *Happiness Is a Song* collection, which consisted of the literal lyrics and alternative lyrics to secular songs (alternative lyrics as liturgical parody). However, he further cites available resources such as Friends of the English Liturgy’s leaflets with supplemental music, as well as Omer Westendorf’s *The People’s Hymnal*.<sup>22</sup>

CCM could possibly be regarded to have started with Father Clarence Rivers, the composer of *An American Mass Program (AMP)*, which used “African American musical idioms” to “express something authentic about the Black American Catholic experience without splicing together traditional African American spirituals or other Black sacred music with the words of the Mass.”<sup>23</sup> Importantly, however, Kim Harris states that the “Missa Luba,” a Congolese Mass set to Latin text, served as a “necessary precondition” for *AMP*.<sup>24</sup> Father Rivers’ song “God is Love” from *AMP* acted as a “centerpiece” to which Harris states, “in 1964, Rivers electrified a congregation of twenty thousand people (virtually all white) during the first official Mass in the English language in the United States.”<sup>25</sup> She explains that “he sang ‘God Is Love’ during the distribution of communion,” receiving praise through an “extended standing ovation

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<sup>21</sup> Canedo, *Keep the Fire Burning*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>23</sup> Kim R. Harris, “Missa Luba, An American Mass Program, and the Transnationalism of Twentieth-Century Black Roman Catholic Liturgical Music,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 9, no.1 (2021): 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

and several encores.”<sup>26</sup> In this way Father Clarence Rivers’ *AMP* acts as one of the initiators of CCM.

Ray Repp also currently has a claim to the title of “the father of contemporary liturgical music,” though his output occurred chronologically after Father Rivers.<sup>27</sup> Repp’s music sets the tone for style that underlies much of the succeeding CCM. Canedo states that “this new music was as fresh as anything sung by Peter, Paul, and Mary...” indicating a connection to the contemporaneous folk-styles of secular artists.<sup>28</sup> Further, Repp introduced his music through the guitar, which characterizes the early folk-style of CCM.

Clearly, a dialogue with musical heritages contributed to the start of CCM defining the first generation of CCM composers. By 1974, *St. Louis Jesuits* released an album entitled *Neither Silver Nor Gold*, initiating a second generation defined by a greater attention to scripture-based lyrics.<sup>29</sup> Though the songs of this second generation still reverberate through churches today, a third generation (via correspondence with Canedo), characterized by “balkanization” of liturgical musical styles, began as early as 1982 with the first edition of *Flor y Canto!*<sup>30</sup>

CCM continues to the present day, when many musical artists can acquire permissions directly from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and self-promote their music via social media. Though large companies dominate the market of liturgical music (e.g., Oregon Catholic Press

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “Ray Repp,” Artists, Oregon Catholic Press, 2022, <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/artists/634/ray-repp>

<sup>28</sup> Canedo, *Keep the Fire Burning*, 42.

<sup>29</sup> Implicit in Canedo’s *From Mountains High: Contemporary Catholic Music 1970–1985* (Chapter 5).

<sup>30</sup> Email correspondence with Canedo, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

and GIA), constantly producing new worship materials yearly, CCM also arises from those who self-publish (e.g., Francesca LaRosa) and assisted self-publishing firms (e.g., Simply Liturgical Music), both of which allow the composer to maintain rights to their songs.<sup>31</sup> In this way, CCM contains a broad range of styles united under the umbrella term, CCM.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter positions CCM as growing out of the Vatican II reforms. With Vatican II permitting the use of the vernacular language in worship, emphasizing active participation, and expanding the permissions on what kind of music could be used in worship, CCM was able to be cultivated by the lay and religious alike. As a result, CCM shows new harmonic processes rooted in secular, traditional music. The next chapter analyzes the harmonic processes found in CCM.

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<sup>31</sup> A special thanks to Kelly Barth for the correspondence regarding the “assisted self-publishing” label.

## CHAPTER II: HARMONIC PROCEDURES OF CCM SONGS

### *Introduction*

Since CCM is stylistically diverse, many harmonic techniques occur within CCM. This chapter addresses those techniques as they appear within specific formal sections (e.g., refrains, verses, etc.), using a lightly modified form of Daniel Harrison's scale-degree theory. Harrison's theory asserts that a chord derives its perceived tonal function (tonic, subdominant, and/or dominant) from the scale degrees found within it. Thus, the scale degrees present in a given progression allow the analyst to determine the tonal functions in that progression, and to discern whether it belongs to either of two paradigms of harmonic motion: plagal cycles (T–D–S–T) or authentic cycles (T–S–D–T). This chapter begins with sections dedicated to the basis and format of the chapter's examples and an explanation of scale-degree theory and nomenclature. The remaining sections of the chapter apply the scale-degree theory to CCM to reflect the harmonic cycles underlying individual CCM formal sections.

### *“Score” Format of Analysis: Lead-sheet Symbols vs. Piano Accompaniments*

Before analyzing harmony in CCM it must be determined whether the analysis will be based on lead-sheet symbols (nomenclature such as Cadd9 or A7) or piano accompaniments, since these two formats often differ in harmony. This study will opt for lead-sheet symbols for several reasons. First, Vatican II ushered in guitar accompaniment, which relied on lead-sheet symbols (e.g., the early CCM groups The Dameans and the St. Louis Jesuits), so using the latter is more pragmatic in terms of the actual materials used by performers. Second, CCM songs can be fully realized using only a single voice and instrument, which suggests that a lead sheet is a sufficient guide to the harmony. Lead sheets rightly emphasize the counterpoint between melodic notes and bass notes. Where a slash appears after a chord symbol, the note after the slash is the

bass note; otherwise, all chords are in root position. A third reason for using lead sheets is that CCM performance is often partly improvised. By using lead-sheet symbols, the analyses better represent what an active participant will aurally experience.

### *Core Functions*

The three *core functions* are the *tonic* (where **T** represents **I** or **i**), *subdominant* (where **S** represents **IV** or **iv**), and *dominant* (where **D** represents **V** or **v**).<sup>32</sup> *Non-core functions* are tonal functions altered by neo-Riemannian transformations. The *core chords* (represented as Roman numerals) are thus **I** or **i**, **IV** or **iv**, and **V** and **v**, which are directly correlated with their respective *core function*. The respective scale-degree assemblies of each function are shown below (**Example 2.1**); **S** is shown as the triad a perfect fifth below **T** (to the left), the dominant as the triad a perfect fifth above **T** (on the right).

### **Example 2.1** – Scale-degree assemblies of each core function

In C major

Subdominant  
**IV** (or **iv**)

fifth below

Tonic  
**I** (or **i**)

fifth above

Dominant  
**V** (or **v**)

Each core function produces a distinct aural impression of its own. For instance, the **T** scale degrees evoke **T** function and **S** scale degrees evoke **S** function. In this line of thought, a *non-core chord*, such as **iii** in major, produces an aural impression related to one of the core

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 36-38.

functions; in the instance of **iii**, it could be heard as **T** or **D** due to its scale-degree assembly and musical context.

Though some scale degrees are shared between the core functions (e.g.,  $\hat{1}$  is shared between tonic and subdominant), the presence of other scale degrees from a core function will typically disambiguate the overall tonal function of a chord. The following sections applies the concept of tonal function further through the example of the lead-sheet symbol  $B\flat/C$  in the key of F major (understood as  $B\flat$  major with C in the bass).

### *Roles of Scale Degrees in Core Functions*

Scale-degree roles help establish and indicate the tonal function of chords, especially chords of mixed tonal function. Harrison asserts that scale degrees derive their “function” from their original position in a given core function. A reproduction of the subdominant with Harrison’s terms for the scale-degree functional roles is shown below (**Example 2.2**).

#### **Example 2.2** – Scale-degrees and functional roles of the subdominant

In C major

Subdominant  
**IV or iv**

In Harrison’s theory, bases (the roots of the core functions) arise from fifth relationships to the tonic’s base ( $\hat{1}$ ): the fifth above the tonic base ( $\hat{5}$ ) and the fifth below the tonic base ( $\hat{4}$ ). In fact, this provides the basis for the non-**T** core functions: if the fifth above is the dominant, the fifth below is the subdominant. The base is the ground from which the agent and associate arise;

it communicates a tonal function by 1) sounding in the lowest voice or 2) when not in the lowest voice, being accompanied by its agent.

Agents (the thirds of the core chords) contribute exclusively to their respective core function (e.g.,  $\hat{6}$  is unique to **S** while  $\hat{3}$  is unique to **T**). Further, agents also communicate a core function through modal inflection (e.g., **I** and **i** both contain the **T** agent  $\hat{3}$ , but **I**'s agent is a semitone higher than **i**'s agent). However, for the core functions **S** and **D** in some major and minor key contexts, modal inflection may affect their functional strength. In a minor key, the diatonic **v** is commonly replaced with **V**, especially at cadences. It suggests that the naturally occurring **v** in natural minor may not evoke **D** function as strongly as its modal counterpart **V**, whose agent lies a semitone under the **T** base; the agent of **v** is a whole tone below the tonic base. Chromatically raising the agent creates a stronger leading-tone relationship between **V** and **i** (**D** and **T** respectively). In regard to **S**, the diatonic **IV** may sometimes be replaced with **iv** which lowers the **S** agent to semi-tone above the **T** associate; in this way, **iv** possesses a subdominant leading tone that may evoke stronger **S** function than **IV** in major. However, regardless of the modal inflection of a core chord, the agent efficiently communicates the correlated core function.

Associates communicate a core function weakly since they rely heavily on their corresponding bases and agents; they possess “little functional power.”<sup>33</sup> This is partly due to their positioning as the fifth of in a core chord; the base and agent communicate the chord's function whereas the associate merely reinforces the given function. However, the associate  $\hat{2}$  (from the core function **D**) is only associate correlated with one specific function, **D**. Despite its allegiance to **D**,  $\hat{2}$  still communicates **D** function weakly in that it requires the accompaniment of

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<sup>33</sup> Harrison, 55–57.

the **D** agent (at least) to help communicate **D** function (such as in **vii**<sup>o</sup>). When  $\hat{2}$  occurs in **ii**, the presence of the **S** base and agent makes **ii** have an **S** function, though  $\hat{2}$  lessens the **S** function.

As for the chord in question ( $B^b/C$  in the key of F major [**Example 2.3**]), the lowest voice contains the  $\hat{5}$ , which is heard as the **D** base; though  $\hat{5}$  also represents the **T** associate, no other **T** scale degrees aid in suggesting **T** function thus making the **D** base the representative function of  $\hat{5}$ .

**Example 2.3** – Representation of  $B^b/C$  with derived core functions

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a flat key signature. The chord  $B^b/C$  is represented by three notes:  $B^b$ ,  $C$ , and  $F$ . Above the staff, the chord is labeled  $B^b/C$ . Below the staff, there are three annotations: "D base" with an arrow pointing to the  $B^b$  note and an eye symbol below it; "Complete S" with an arrow pointing to the  $C$  and  $F$  notes; and "D/S" centered below the staff.

The upper voices create a subdominant impression with all the scale degrees for the core function **S**. Concisely, the lone **D** base combined with the **S** function presents two functions at odds within a single chord. Implicit in Harrison’s wording, this chord demonstrates *functional mixture* which describes the simultaneous juxtaposition of two separate core functions (such as **T** and **S**).<sup>34</sup> Harrison’s theory would dictate that the **D** takes precedence over **S** since the **D** base sounds in the lowest voice.<sup>35</sup> However, this study emphasizes the importance of tonal function; to write the chord off as entirely **D** function ignores the considerable **S** function of the chord in question. Further, Harrison also recognizes that functional theorists viewed a dominant-seventh as functionally mixed (albeit “faint”).<sup>36</sup> Though a dominant-seventh chord contains a hint of **S**

<sup>34</sup> Harrison, 100.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 65.

function, functional mixture will only be denoted in instances similar to  $B\flat/C$ : the tonal function yields **D/S** to recognize the presence of both core functions.

### *Non-Core Chords and Transformations*

Though non-core functions exist, they only exist as transformations since the analytical nomenclature is designed to articulate a prevailing core function. Parallel to this notion, some chords fall outside of the core chord collection (i.e., **I/i**, **IV/iv**, **V/v**). Non-core chords (e.g., **ii**, **III**, **vi**, etc.) use a combination of scale degrees from multiple core functions, but yield a single core function depending on musical context. For instance, **vi** contains a scale-degree assembly that relates to both core functions **T** and **S**. However, **vi**, in musical context, tends to function as **T**, despite the **S** agent ( $\hat{6}$ ) sounding in the base; the **T** base/**S** associate ( $\hat{1}$ ) and the **T** agent ( $\hat{3}$ ) make the chord's function ambiguous. Therefore, to determine the function of **vi** we must see how it operates within a musical phrase. **iii** is similarly ambiguous since it contains the **T** agent ( $\hat{3}$ ), the **T** associate/**D** base ( $\hat{5}$ ), and **D** agent ( $\hat{7}$ ). Though **iii** traditionally appears to have **T** function, **iii** may subtly communicate **D** based on its role in a harmonic progression.

When the tonal function of a non-core chord is established, the functional symbol also receives a neo-Riemannian transformational symbol (or symbols) to reflect its relationship to a core function (e.g., **T<sub>R</sub>**). In this study, the only transformational symbols used are **Relative**, **Leading-tone**, and **parallel** (represented as + or °). An “**R**” transformation “converts a major triad to a minor triad by moving the fifth a whole-step up and vice versa, moves a minor triad to major triad by moving the root down by whole-step.”<sup>37</sup> For instance, **T<sub>R</sub>** represents **vi**, **I**'s relative. An “**L**” transformation “converts a major triad to a minor triad by moving the root down by half-

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<sup>37</sup> Laura Felicity Mason, “Essential Neo-Riemannian Theory for Today’s Musician” (master’s thesis, The University of Tennessee, 2013), 17.

step, and from minor to major, by moving the fifth up a half-step to become the root of the resulting triad.” For instance, **S<sub>L</sub>** also represents **vi**, but as **IV**’s leading-tone transformation. Parallel transformations are represented as + for a change to a major quality of a given triad or ° for a change to a minor quality of a given triad; these symbols are only applied to non-diatonic chords. Multiple symbols can be applied to a single function. When more than one letter symbol is used, the transformation order is performed from left to right.

This study uses both roman numerals and function symbols because roman numerals are sometimes functionally ambiguous. For example, **vi** may be tonally functioning as **S<sub>L</sub>**, but in most standard practice cases **vi** is understood as **T<sub>r</sub>**.<sup>38</sup> Overall, tonal functions help contextualize a given chord’s tonal function within a progression when roman numerals cannot. Additionally, tonal functions help in broadening the harmonic process of a phrase or musical section. Roman numerals represent chords, but the more exacting tonal functions give a clearer picture of how a given chord progression works. Especially important to this study, tonal functions also help in classifying harmonic progression types where roman numerals cannot.

When the above ambiguities are resolved, Harrison’s scale-degree theory provides an understanding of how to classify individual chords into functional categories. At the next level of organization, tonal functions join into coherent progressions, called cycles because they begin and end with **T**. Cycles tend to follow a process of resolving or stabilizing motions, known as *discharges*.

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<sup>38</sup> “Ho Hey” by the Lumineers uses **vi** as **S**.

*T–D–S–T: Complete Plagal Cycles in CCM*

Complete plagal cycles contain agent-to-associate relationships between each pair of tonal functions: **T–D–S–T** (**Example 2.4**).<sup>39</sup> **T**'s  $\hat{3}$  discharges to **D**'s  $\hat{2}$ , **D**'s  $\hat{7}$  discharges to **S**'s  $\hat{1}$ , and **S**'s discharges to **T**'s  $\hat{5}$ . The **S**→**T** portion of the cycle closely associates with the “Amen” plagal cadence.

**Example 2.4** – Plagal cycle

In C major

$\hat{3} \rightarrow \hat{2}$ 
 $\hat{6} \rightarrow \hat{5}$

$\hat{7} \rightarrow \hat{8}$

**T**                      **D**                      **S**                      **T**

Carey Landry’s “Hail Mary, Gentle Woman” demonstrates this at the refrain’s consequent phrase (**Example 2.5**). D major (**T**) moves to A major (**D**) yielding a **T**→**D** discharge, A major (**D**) moves to G major (**S**) yielding a **D**→**S** discharge, and G major (**S**) moves to D major (**T**) yielding an **S**→**T** discharge. In full, the complete plagal cycle delivers closure to the refrain. From a Schenkerian perspective, one could try to view the final G major’s root as passing to an implied F# in the final D major, thereby implying a buffered authentic motion (**D** to **T** with **S** as passing). However, this downplays the discharge process in favor of reducing a full chord’s presence to a mere motion. In reality, **D**’s agent (from A major) discharges to the **S** associate (from G major), while the **D** associate lingers with consonant support from G major; in other words, **S** plays a significant role in resolving the phrase completely and should be understood to be as important as **D**.

<sup>39</sup> Harrison, 96–102.

**Example 2.5** – Carey Landry, “Hail Mary, Gentle Woman”

**Refrain (consequent)**

gen - tle Mo - ther, peace - ful dove,

T (S) T

T prolongation

teach us wis - dom; teach us love.

T D S T

Plagal cycle

The use of the plagal cycle reinforces the main idea of the song: Mary, Mother of God, as the “gentle woman” and “quiet light.” I submit that, because of the perceived functional qualities of scale degrees, this plagal-cycle progression produces a softer affect (as in psychology) with the **D**→**S** discharge occurring before the arrival to **T**. By introducing  $\hat{1}$  as the **S** associate in the melody, thereby anticipating the **T** base  $\hat{1}$ , the **D**→**S** discharge results in a smaller voice-leading distance between the penultimate chord (i.e., **S** instead of **D**) and the closing **T**. Those voices that do move to the final **T** do so in parallel, (with the exception of the bass  $\hat{4}$ → $\hat{1}$ ). By allowing for minimal voice-leading motion into the closing tonic, the plagal cycle provides a passive resolution that is appropriate to the textual subject matter.

The above example uses **IV** for the cycle’s **S**. Alternatively, **ii** may follow or replace **IV**, since **ii** also contains the **S** agent ( $\hat{6}$ ) responsible for the **S**→**T** discharge motion. Tom Booth’s “Go into the World” (**Example 2.6**) uses **S** (F major) to **S<sub>R</sub>** (Dm7) during its plagal cycle in the

refrain's consequent.<sup>40</sup> The shift from **S**→**S<sub>R</sub>** results in a subtle gain in **D** function (due to the introduction of  $\hat{2}$ ); however, **S** governs the function of the chord. The overall effect of the **S**→**T** discharge in Booth's "Go into the World" is comparable to that of "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman" in that it produces a soft resolution to the final **T**.

**Example 2.6** – Tom Booth, "Go Into the World"

**Refrain**  
(consequent)

Let your presence light

**T** **D**

new light in others, in their hearts.

**(D)** **(p)** **S** **(S<sub>R</sub>)** **T**

"passing"

In summary, the plagal cycle delivers sectional closure via the **S** chords **ii**, **IV**, or **iv**. Though other theoretical possibilities for **S**→**T** of the complete plagal cycle exist (excluding modal representatives of **ii** and **IV**), each would rely on the plagal discharge cycle (agent-to-associate discharges).

<sup>40</sup> Seventh chords receive functional labels as if the seventh were omitted from the chord since the tonal function is usually preserved. The "omitted" tones should still be considered present.

*T–S–T: Reduced Plagal Cycles in CCM*

While a full plagal cycle comprises  $\mathbf{T} \rightarrow \mathbf{D} \rightarrow \mathbf{S} \rightarrow \mathbf{T}$ , a plagal cycle may omit  $\mathbf{D}$ , yielding the reduced plagal cycle  $\mathbf{T} \rightarrow \mathbf{S} \rightarrow \mathbf{T}$  (**Example 2.7**).

**Example 2.7** – Reduced plagal cycle

The musical notation shows a treble clef with three measures. The first measure contains a whole note on C4, labeled 'T' below and 'In C major' above. The second measure contains a whole note on E4, labeled 'S' below, with '3̂ → 4̂' above. The third measure contains a whole note on G4, labeled 'T' below, with '6̂ → 5̂' above. Slurs connect the notes across the measure boundaries.

The initial  $\mathbf{T}$  discharges into  $\mathbf{S}$  via an agent-to-base motion ( $\hat{3}$  to  $\hat{4}$ ) and  $\mathbf{S}$  discharges into the final  $\mathbf{T}$  via an agent-to-associate motion ( $\hat{6}$  to  $\hat{5}$ ). For example, in Carey Landry’s “Abba! Father!” (**Example 2.8**), the refrain’s closing plagal motion exists exclusively through the resolution of G major to D major.

**Example 2.8** – Carey Landry, “Abba, Father”

**Refrain**

D G

Ab - ba, \_\_\_\_\_ Ab - ba,

T S

T prolongation

7 D G D

Fa - ther, \_\_\_\_\_ you are the pot - ter; \_\_\_\_\_

T S T [moving to S]

T prolongation

13 G D

\_\_\_\_\_ we are the clay, \_\_\_\_\_

S T

Implied S→T

17 G D

\_\_\_\_\_ the work of your hands. \_\_\_\_\_

S T

Implied S→T



In a “textbook” period, the antecedent concludes with a half cadence (**V**) or imperfect authentic cadence (**I/i**) while the consequent phrase typically ends with a perfect authentic cadence.<sup>41</sup> One could further broaden the scope of the antecedent as ending on any chord expressing a core function, widening the range of cadence that allow a consequent to follow naturally. For instance, Marty Haugen’s “Gather Us In” (**Example 2.10**) which implies an **S** ending in its first phrase. The first two measures contain a descending-second harmonic sequence, while the following two measures contain a harmonic progression that breaks the sequence and sets up the arrival to the plagal half cadence.

**Example 2.10** – Marty Haugen, “Gather Us In”

**Antecedent**

D A C G Gm/B $\flat$  Dm C G

Here in this place new light is stream-ing, now is the dark - ness van-ished a - way

i V  $\flat$ VII IV iv<sup>6</sup> i  $\flat$ VII IV

T D S of S S S<sup>°</sup> T S of S S

**Consequent**

D A C G Gm/B $\flat$  Dm C Am7 D

5 See in this space our fears and our dream-ings, brought here to you in the light of this day.  
as before... ...

$\flat$ VII i

D<sup>°</sup><sub>R</sub> T

<sup>41</sup> Caplin, 49.



In measure 4, the E of “vanished” to the D of “away” reflects **S** of **S** → **S** discharge motion. This discharge motion also further implies the use of **S** as a half cadence.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, when an incomplete cycle characterizes a phrase, the harmonic open-endedness creates the effect of a half cadence (since the phrase rests on a chord containing the **S** agent which can discharge to the tonic).<sup>43</sup> Further, it allows the melody to settle on  $\hat{1}$  with the harmonic effect of incompleteness (that more is to come). In this way, the *core chords IV* or *iv* play an important cadential role (in some antecedent phrases at least).

#### *T–S–D–T: Complete Authentic Cycles in CCM*

Complete authentic cycles (**T**→**S**→**D**→**T**) contain agent-to-base relationships whereas plagal cycles contain agent-to-associate relationships (**Example 2.13**).<sup>44</sup>

#### **Example 2.13** – Authentic cycle

In C major

3̂ → 4̂

7̂ → 8̂

6̂ → 5̂

T S D T

<sup>42</sup> Other instances of the plagal half cadence appear in Curtis Stephan’s “Miracle of Grace” (at the end of the antecedent phrase of the refrain) and Timothy R. Smith’s “In the Breaking of the Bread” (at end of the antecedent phrase of the verse).

<sup>43</sup> The same principle applies to the incomplete authentic cycle, which would typically describe a half-cadence.

<sup>44</sup> Harrison, 96–102.

Complete authentic cycles are likely the most commonplace cycle found in CCM, embracing all progressions that lead to a cadential  $V \rightarrow I$ . Despite its prevalence, some progressions include inserted functions in between tonal functions of the authentic cycle.

*D<sup>-S</sup>T: Plagal Buffer versus the Plagal Cycle*

Sometimes **IV** may serve as a buffer in an authentic cycle's  $D \rightarrow T$  discharge. Though it may appear to allude to the plagal cycle process, the placement of **IV** at the phrase ending changes our understanding of its role in harmonic cycles. Identifying the *essential refrain closure* (ERC), the closing cadence of the refrain, assists in establishing whether **IV** acts as a buffer in an  $D \rightarrow T$  discharge or a member of the plagal cycle by defining harmonic closure.<sup>45</sup> The ERC establishes a sense of tonal finality (**T** function) through melodic and harmonic closure (often working together, though not always).<sup>46</sup> At the ERC, the section's prevailing cycle usually finishes *at* the ERC with a discharge to a **T** function. Therefore, if **S** occurs *before* the ERC, it likely implies a plagal cycle process. For instance, Carey Landry's "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman" (**Example 2.5**) uses **S** before the ERC (The ERC occurs at "love").

In contrast, when an intervening **S** chord occurs between **D**'s discharge **T** *at* the ERC, "**S**" is best understood as buffer to **T**. In the majority of cases, the **T** base will support the "**S**" chord in the lowest voice indicating a strong **T** arrival. Jaime Cortez's "Rain Down" exemplifies this at the refrain's second ending (**Example 2.14**).

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<sup>45</sup> This term is influenced by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory*, which uses the terms *essential expositional closure* (EEC) and *essential structural closure* (ESC) to indicate section endings in various sonata form models (see xxvi).

<sup>46</sup> Melodic finality remains looser in that any **T** scale degree may serve as the ending note. Harmonic finality requires **T**.

**Example 2.14** – Jaime Cortez, “Rain Down”

**Refrain**

(consequent)

F A7/E Dm F7/C

Rain down, rain down, of rain down, of

T D of TR D of

B $\flat$  C C7 B $\flat$ /F F

rain down your love, God of life.

S D of ST T

Authentic Cycle ERC

*The Special Case of the Aeolian Cadence*

The Aeolian progression ( $\flat$ VI– $\flat$ VII–i [or I]), a term taken from Nicole Biamonte, best conforms to the authentic cycle, but lacks the characteristic S→D discharge since the  $\hat{6}$  of  $\flat$ IV cannot discharge to  $\hat{5}$  (as  $\flat$ VII contains no  $\hat{5}$ ).<sup>47</sup> A reproduction of Biamonte’s example shows the likeness of the Aeolian progression to an authentic cadence (**Example 2.15**).

**Example 2.15** – Biamonte’s representation of the Aeolian cadence (“progression”)

a. Aeolian b. major

S → D → T S → D → T

$\flat$ VI  $\flat$ VII I IV V I

<sup>47</sup> Nicole Biamonte, “Triadic Modal and Pentatonic Patterns in Rock Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 32, no.2 (Fall 2010): 101.

Biamonte states, “Aeolian progressions comprise two successive root movements upwards by whole step, and can be interpreted as either a substitution by third for the tonal cadence IV–V–I... or an expansion of the modal subtonic cadence  $\flat$ VII–I.”<sup>48</sup> However, not all Aeolian progressions produce the same aural effect (as presented above), resulting in distinct functions for  $\flat$ VI and  $\flat$ VII.

For instance, Bob Dufford’s “Save Us, O Lord” (**Example 2.16**), in E minor, contains an Aeolian cadence with C major and D major chords as  $\flat$ VI and  $\flat$ VII (**S<sub>R</sub>** and **D<sub>R</sub>** respectively). The use of **S** and **D** from the relative demonstrates the Aeolian cadence’s connection to the major cadence (as Biamonte’s model expresses). In this way, one can understand the discharge process as occurring within the relative major, G major to only revert to E minor (**Example 2.17a**).

**Example 2.16** – Bob Dufford, SJ, “Save Us, O Lord”

G	A	Bm	Em	C	D	Em
III	IV	v	i	$\flat$ VI	$\flat$ VII	i
1) T <sub>R</sub>	S+	D	T	S <sub>R</sub>	D <sub>R</sub>	T
T prolongation				(or) 2) D <sub>R</sub> of D <sub>R</sub>		
Complete authentic cycle						

<sup>48</sup> Biamonte, 101.

**Example 2.17** – Possible functional discharges occurring in the Aeolian cadence

a) invocation of G major's authentic cycle      b) double **D** discharge in E minor

(G major's  $\hat{6} \rightarrow \hat{5}$ )

(E minor's  $\hat{6} \rightarrow ?$ )

$\hat{7} \rightarrow \hat{1} = \hat{7} \rightarrow \hat{1}$

$\flat\text{VI}$        $\flat\text{VII}$        $\text{i}$        $\flat\text{VII}$  of  $\flat\text{VII}$        $\text{i}$

$\text{S}_R$        $\text{D}_R$        $\text{T}$        $\text{D}_R$  of  $\text{D}_R$        $\text{T}$

However, it is unclear whether a listener really experiences G major at the Aeolian cadence as the analysis so far implies. To hear  $\text{S} \rightarrow \text{D}$  in E minor presents an issue with the Aeolian cadence due to the lack of the characteristic  $\hat{6} \rightarrow \hat{5}$  discharge motion. Alternatively, one can consider reanalysis by using applied chords to describe the phenomenon. Suppose  $\flat\text{VI}$  temporarily acts as the  $\text{D}_R$  of  $\text{D}_R$  (effectively  $\flat\text{VII}$  of  $\flat\text{VII}$  in **Example 2.17**). The temporary  $\text{D}_R$  status of  $\flat\text{VI}$  allows it to supply a  $\text{D} \rightarrow \text{T}$  discharge to the penultimate  $\text{D}_R$  ( $\flat\text{VII}$ ), which then delivers the final  $\text{D} \rightarrow \text{T}$  discharge. The strength of the “applied-chord” view is that tonal functions work within E minor, without the invocation of G major, despite the lack of an  $\text{S} \rightarrow \text{D}$  available in Aeolian cadence process.

On the other hand, Janèt Sullivan Whitaker’s “In Every Age,” (**Example 2.18**) presents the Aeolian cadence in a context where  $\text{B}\flat$  major and G minor both possess equal core  $\text{T}$  function, giving the impression of two coexisting keys (commonly referred to as a double-tonic complex); this is in contrast to the typical case where a clear core  $\text{T}$  and non-core  $\text{T}$  chords remain distinguishable. According to Drew Nobile, when a song includes a double-tonic

complex, “two keys exist” in that “each component key represents a different incarnation of a single, more abstract tonality encompassing them both.”<sup>49</sup> The double-tonic complex allows for the keys’ diatonic chords to have shared functions. For instance, “E $\flat$ ” has **S** function and “F” has **D** function in both the key of G minor and B $\flat$  major. In this way, the double-tonic complex allows the song to shift between tonalities simply through functional, diatonic harmony. In Whitaker’s “In Every Age,” the Aeolian cadence better fits Biamonte’s model in that the relative major (B $\flat$  major) is strongly articulated before the Aeolian cadence process. The listener, still grounded in B $\flat$  major, only hears G minor as the other **T** at the end of the excerpt.

**Example 2.18** – Janèt Sullivan Whitaker, “In Every Age”

**Refrain**

In ev - 'ry age, O God, you have been our ref - uge.

**B $\flat$ : V (D)**      **IV S**      **V D**      **I T**

5 In ev - 'ry age, O God you have been our hope.

**I T**      **IV S**      **V D**      **G $\flat$ : =  $\flat$ VII = T**      **i = T**

Aeolian cadence

<sup>49</sup> Drew Nobile, “Double-Tonic Complexes in Rock Music” *Music Theory Spectrum* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2020):

*T–S–D: Incomplete Authentic Cycles in CCM*

Incomplete authentic cycles comprise the majority of half cadences in tonal music. The overall harmonic motion outlines **T–S–D**. Suzanne Toolan’s “I Am the Bread of Life” (**Example 2.19**) demonstrates this in its first phrase (second phrase included for context).

**Example 2.19** – Suzanne Toolan, RSM, “I Am the Bread of Life”

**Verse**

Ab Fm Cm Db Dbmaj7 Ebsus4 Eb

I am the Bread of life. You who come to me shall not hun - ger; \_\_\_ and who be -

T prolongation S D

Incomplete authentic cycle

5 Ab Cm7 Db

lieve in me shall not thrist.

T etc.

The first three chords prolong the **T** function where “Cm” delivers the **T**→**S** discharge to **Db** major (which then discharge to **Eb** via **S**→**D** discharge). Since the phrase ends on **D**, the authentic cycle remains incomplete and therefore produces the effect of a half cadence.

Earlier CCM music uses a popular approach to half cadences with the progression **ii–bVII–V**. A theoretical issue occurs with the functional status of **bVII**. As established above, **bVII** produces a **D** function or **S** of **S** function depending on musical context. However, in this progression, the **bVII** sounds like an extension from the prior **ii**, prolonging the **S** function. For example, Darryl Ducote’s “Look Beyond” (**Example 2.20**) uses this progression at the end of the verse.

**Example 2.20** – Darryl Ducote, “Look Beyond”: (bottom line melody, top line descant)

The musical score for Example 2.20 is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. The top staff is a descant consisting of whole chords: Fmaj7, Gm, Eb, and C. The bottom staff is the melody with lyrics: "Mo - ses brought them man - na from the sky." The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Below the melody, Roman numerals and function labels are provided: T (under G4), SR (under A4), D°R (under Bb4), SRL (under C5), and D (under Bb4).

This technique is what I call *harmonic gradation*, where one function gradually morphs into another function (understood through function reinterpretation). In “Look Beyond,” the harmonic gradation occurs between G minor and C major (S→D gradation).<sup>50</sup> The gradating effect lies in the lack of opportunity for the **S** agent to discharge to **D**. G minor cannot discharge effectively to Eb since no  $\hat{6} \rightarrow \hat{5}$  immediately occurs. Though one could say that the discharge to  $\hat{5}$  is implied with **D** function status of  $\flat$ VII, ultimately the motion does not occur until the articulation of **V**. **Example 2.21** provides a supplementary diagram to clarify the harmonic gradation process.

**Example 2.21** – Harmonic gradation at verse ending of “Look Beyond”

The musical score for Example 2.21 shows a harmonic progression in B-flat major. The top staff has a melody with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. The bottom staff has notes G2, F2, G2, F2, G2. Above the melody, two phrases are labeled "(passing)". A dashed line connects the G4 in the first measure to the Bb4 in the second measure, with the text "S→D-mediated escape tone?" below it. Roman numerals and function labels are provided below the staff: ii (SR) under G4, ♭VII (D°R, SRL) under Bb4, and V (D) under C5.

<sup>50</sup> Other forms of harmonic gradation exist such as **T**→**S**, **D**→**T**, **S**→**D**<sup>°</sup>**L**, etc. in tonal music.

In **Example 2.21**, **S** provides the starting point of the **S**→**D** discharge for the incomplete authentic cycle. However, between **S**→**D** occurs the chord **bVII** that sounds like it prolongs **S** function while also evoking **D** function. The medial chord likely sounds like **S** prolongation since 1)  $\hat{6}$  cannot resolve to  $\hat{5}$  immediately (only until **V**), 2) participates in a goal-oriented process between two diatonic chords, and 3) relates to **S<sub>R</sub>** by third (though also to **D** by third).

**Example 2.21** reflects the tiered rise to **D** through the reinterpretation of **bVII** as a **D** function to an **S** function. Though **bVII** may as **D** or **S** of **S**, it also participates in the process of harmonic gradation between **S**→**D**.

*Case Study: Curtis Stephen's "Miracle of Grace"*

The refrain of Curtis Stephen's "Miracle of Grace" (**Example 2.22**) contains a cadential anomaly for CCM (in score at the **ERC** as **D**→**S(!)**). The antecedent phrase consists of a half authentic cycle while the consequent reiterates the antecedent, albeit anticipating closure to **T** (**B<sub>b</sub>** major). However, instead of concluding on **T**, the **S**-functioning **E<sub>b</sub>** major concludes the section as the final prolonged harmony of the section, but leaving the section open-ended. In this sense, the refrain reaches closure (**ERC**), but not harmonically.

According to the principles set forth above, the authentic cycle most reasonably describes the consequent phrase since **D** discharging to **S** at the **ERC** implies an **S**-buffer to an eventual **T** (such as in Jaime Corte's "Rain Down"). On the other hand, "Miracle of Grace" always ends the refrain *without* discharging into the literal **T**; and since **T** is only achieved if a verse follows the refrain (not shown), the refrain-ending **S** may substitute for an implied **T** at the refrain end. In this line of thought, the refrain-ending **S** chord acts as a recipient of **D**→**T** where **S** provides consonant support for the refrain's ending. In other words, the ending **S** to "Miracle of Grace" may have **T** function in that there is an implied authentic cycle, but no one can ignore the clear

aural effect of **S**. Therefore, it is best to say the refrain the ends on a **S** as a **T** substitute due to its occurrence at the ERC (reinforced by the preceding authentic cycle)

Regarding the ending, Curtis Stephan states, “I ended up on the IV chord at the end of Miracle of Grace because ending on the I chord felt too final.” The strength of the **S** ending is that it communicates a sense of formal finality for the chorus but also directs to the verse’s beginning (similar to that of a soft “Amen” plagal motion). Stephan also elaborates on the advantages to this open **S** ending. Theologically, it may represent the “Eucharist is an ongoing sort of continued growth” and “a continued pondering.” Further, he expresses that the “Lydian sound” within IV associates with the “sound of heaven or something eternal happening like a miracle.” This “Lydian sound” occurs within the prolongation of **S** (see #4sus2). Finally, he states that a practical purpose exists as an “option to extend instrumentally and go back to the chorus.”<sup>51</sup>

Overall, “Miracle of Grace” achieves the ERC in the refrain through a **D**→**T** discharge (implied by melodic closure) but stays harmonically open with **S** as the recipient of a discharge from **D**.

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<sup>51</sup> Email correspondence with Stephen, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Example 2.22 – Curtis Stephen, “Miracle of Grace”

**Antecedent**

**Refrain** F/A Gm F Eb B♭/D

Bread of life, bread of life. Those who eat this bread shall live

D T<sub>R</sub> D S T

**Consequent**

E♭ F<sup>sus4</sup> F Gm F E♭

and nev - ver die. Bread of life, bread of life. Your true pres-

S D T<sub>R</sub> D S

7 B♭/D E♭

- ence in this ho - ly sac - ri - fice. Bread of life.

T S D S (!)  
[ERC]

1, 2.  
F<sup>sus4</sup> F E♭ E♭<sup>sus2</sup>(#4) E♭

Bread of life, bread of life.

D S (!)  
[ERC]

Final  
F<sup>sus4</sup> F E♭ E♭<sup>sus2</sup>(#4) E♭ E♭<sup>sus2</sup>(#4) E♭ E♭<sup>sus2</sup>(#4) E♭

Bread of life, bread of life.

D S (!)  
[ERC]

*Conclusion*

This chapter has been dedicated to articulating harmonic processes found within song sections of CCM using Daniel Harrison's scale-degree theory. The concept of harmonic gradation gives greater depth to well-known harmonic processes such as the Aeolian cadence. Additionally, the analyses have made connections with popular music scholarship, supplementing the claims of popular music influence found in Chapter I.

The analyses serve to show that the harmonic "language" of CCM differs from the harmonic "language" of proto-CCM, which would exclusively use the authentic cycle. These cycles often correlate (especially the plagal cycle) with subject matter of the text. CCM composers make extensive use of both plagal and authentic cycles (complete and incomplete) in the music they produce. These cycles underlie complete formal sections within CCM songs, or extend to entire song forms, as the next chapter will show.

### CHAPTER III: FORMAL AND HARMONIC PROCEDURES OF LEADING-REFRAIN FORMS

#### *Introduction*

The previous chapter, using Harrison's scale-degree theory, explored CCM's plagal and authentic cycles within short spans of music. These cycles also extend to entire songs. The present chapter broadens the application of these cycles to a whole-song form common within CCM, which I call *leading-refrain form*.

#### *Theorizing and Disassembling the Leading-Refrain Form*

All leading-refrain forms consists of three main internal formal sections: the initial refrain (a), the linking verse (b), and the concluding refrain (a'). The initial refrain provides the central lyrical message of the song and the central musical theme (i.e., the melody). The linking verse follows the initial refrain and, broadly speaking, gives greater depth to the central lyrical message found in the initial refrain. Lastly, the concluding refrain reframes the lyrical and musical material of the initial refrain as a musical and textual reemphasis (or end goal at the song's end).

In its formal organization, leading-refrain form is more closely akin to the Caplinian small ternary theme-type (A–B–A'), which holds a similar overall structure; the B section of Caplin's small ternary tends to contain looser organization while the A and A' contain "tight-knit" construction.<sup>52</sup> Internally, leading-refrain form differs in that refrains *and* linking verses can fully consist of "tight-knit" sections (i.e., having "harmonic-tonal stability, cadential

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<sup>52</sup> William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 13.

confirmation, unity of melodic-motivic material, efficiency of functional expression, and symmetrical phrase groupings.”).<sup>53</sup>

The leading-refrain form also evinces a rondo quality (e.g., ABACA) in that A moves to a contrasting section, B, and back to A. James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy assert that each A “refrain” initiates a new “rotation” and the reappearance of A would constitute a new “half-rotation” (e.g., AB–AC–A).<sup>54</sup> However, leading-refrain linking verses (b) tend to relate back to initial refrain (a) and forward to the concluding refrain (a’), giving the impression of connection between the two refrains. In addition, popular song forms typically have a verse→refrain (chorus) teleology; if verses are “starting points,” it is best to maintain the connection between the verse and the concluding refrain.<sup>55</sup> Hepokoski and Darcy’s initiating refrain correlates with the leading-refrain forms initial refrain→linking verse teleology. However, the concluding refrain should always be understood as connected with the prior linking verse.

In this study, the three sections unite into one larger formal unit, A<sub>1</sub> (**Figure 3.1a**), using a single linking verse (disregarding intros and outros). When additional verses are added, the leading-refrain form adds an overlapping A units (**Figure 3.1b**), intro and outros also aside. The second refrain functions simultaneously as the concluding refrain of A<sub>1</sub> and retrospectively as the initial refrain of A<sub>2</sub>; in this way, additional verses may continue to extend the song’s form (A<sub>3</sub>, A<sub>4</sub>, etc.), but always with the implication of ending the formal unit with the concluding refrain unless otherwise stated.

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<sup>53</sup> Caplin, 17.

<sup>54</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 390.

<sup>55</sup> Drew Nobile, *Form as Harmony in Rock Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 39.

**Figure 3.1** – Layouts of leading-refrain form*a. One unit*

(Initial) Refrain [a]	(Linking) Verse [b]	Concluding) Refrain [a']
A <sub>1</sub>		

*b. Two units*

A <sub>1</sub>				
Refrain	Verse	Refrain	Verse	Refrain
A <sub>2</sub>				

The following sections provide more depth to each formal section's roles in the overall form. Examining the roles and processes correlated with each formal section allows for a better grasp as to how leading-refrain form functions lyrically and harmonically in Roman Catholic worship.

*Roles of the Initial Refrain*

The initial refrain of a leading-refrain song delivers the central message of the song and the main musical theme (i.e., the melody). The central message often correlates with the song's position in the mass (e.g., an opening/gathering song at the beginning, a communion song during communion, etc.) and is typically composed of imperative and declarative statements. Two gathering songs commonly used at Roman Catholic liturgical observances support this claim (**Example 3.1**). Both examples use imperative and declarative statements that invite congregants into Mass through song. And though interrogative statements may occur as well, they tend to be presented and asked rhetorically (see Tom Booth's "Can We Love?"). Overall, the lyrics of the initial refrains provide the subjects of the songs.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> In corresponding with Rory Cooney on "Walk in the Reign," he believes the initial refrain sets "the [lyrical] theme of the song." He also states that the verses "echo" the theme.

**Example 3.1** – Sample gathering song refrains*a.*

Refrain of “Come to the River” by Bob Hurd	
Antecedent Phrase	Consequent Phrase
Come, O come, come to the river flowing from the body of Christ. [imperative]	We’ll go down, deep in the water, but in the Lord we shall arise. [declarative]

*b.*

Refrain of “All Are Welcome” by Jesse Manibusan and Jennah Manibusan	
Antecedent Phrase	Consequent Phrase
All are welcome in this place. [declarative] Behold Love’s amazing grace. [imperative] All are welcome! All are welcome! [exclamatory]	Bring your hopes, bring your dreams. [imperative] Mercy flow and Love redeems! [exclamatory] All are welcome! All belong! [exclamatory]

The central musical theme of the leading-refrain song is the refrain’s melody and accompaniment. Typically, these musical themes are structured as periods, which contains an antecedent phrase and consequent phrase (as with the sample gathering songs). This structure remains straightforward and easily memorable for a congregation and the musicians, perhaps also explaining the high prevalence of period thematic structure in leading-refrain form’s refrains.

However, outside of period structure, the structure of central musical themes seems to vary by individual song. In this case, there is likely an internal coherence to the thematic structure that allows the refrain to be at least moderately learnable for a congregation and musicians. For instance, Bob Hurd’s “Shelter Me, O God” is structured in the analysis as three grouping units (**Example 3.2**).



**Example 3.3** – Paul Inwood, “Center of My Life”

**Refrain**

O Lord, you are the cen-ter of my life: I will al-ways praise you,  
**T (S) T (S) TR+ T** prolongation via sequence

I will al-ways serve you, I will al-ways keep you in my sight.  
 sequence continued **S Cm: S = T+**  
 Reduced plagal cycle

**Verse**  
 7 **Ab Bb Eb Cm**  
 Keep me safe, O God, I take ref-uge in you.  
**Eb: S D T** etc.

The song begins in  $E\flat$  major, oscillating between **S**-functioning chords. After the sequence passage of the refrain,  $Cm$  begins to fulfill the role of **T** as made apparent with the final plagal motion to  $C$  major (which produces a Picardy third effect). Even though the refrain ends on  $C$  major, the majority of the song resides in  $E\flat$  major. For instance, the following first verse quickly reverts to  $E\flat$  major. One could make the case that the song ends  $TR+$  in  $E\flat$  major. No matter the analysis, the ending does satisfy the achievement of **T** function at the refrain’s ending (adjacent to the double-tonic complex found in Whitaker’s “In Every Age” [Example 2.18]).

In summary, the initial refrain’s positioning at the beginning of the song allows for the composer to establish the message/subject of the song, as well as a musical theme with a straightforward structure that (as is typical) achieves **T** as part of its internal harmonic cycle

(plagal or authentic). The following section discusses the roles of the concluding refrain, which uses the same material as the initial refrain.

### *Roles of the Concluding Refrain*

Leading-refrain songs contain a concluding refrain as well. The concluding refrain brings back the musical and lyrical material of the initial refrain, but only after a preceding linking verse; depending on linking verse type (discussed below), the concluding refrain may also reestablish the tonic. Nonetheless, the linking verse, similarly to that of a verse-refrain song, is directed toward the concluding refrain. The verse bestows culminative weight and desired “complete closure” on the concluding refrain, differentiating the latter from the initial refrain, similar to that of A’ in a small ternary form.<sup>58</sup>

In the context of a leading-refrain song as a whole, the concluding refrain reemphasizes the central message of the song. It differs from the initial refrain in that the central message is reiterated *after* the lyrical depth and support of the preceding linking verse. For instance, Tom Booth’s “Go Into the World” (**Example 3.4**) demonstrates a leading-refrain unit: the initial refrain puts forth the central message (“Go into the world”), the linking verse serves to support this message (evident with its beginning on the coordinating conjunction “for”), and the concluding refrain reemphasizes the central message where the addition of “so” demonstrates the continuity between the verse and the concluding refrain.

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<sup>58</sup> Caplin, 13.

**Example 3.4** – Tom Booth, “Go Into the World”

Initial Refrain	Go into the world, loving the people that you meet. Let your presence light new light in others, in their hearts.
Linking Verse	For you are my hands, and you are my feet To all those you meet, to all those you greet, to all those in need.
Concluding Refrain	[So] Go into the world, loving the people that you meet. Let your presence light new light in others, in their hearts.

In this way, the leading-refrain unit contains a lyric structure formed like a poetic miniature argument. The initial refrain asserts a claim or tells you to do something, the linking verse provides reasoning for the refrain, and the concluding refrain returns reasserting the general message with the verse’s lyrics now in mind.<sup>59</sup> Though the “argument” of one song differs from that of another, it remains true that refrains in general contain “summarizing, non-narrative” lyric content, while verses add depth and detail to the subject matter.<sup>60</sup> Despite this generalization about the lyrical structure of refrains, the concluding refrain is better understood with its positioning after the linking verse (whereas the initial refrain is not).

The concluding refrain can be summarized as 1) serving as the ending of leading-refrain unit, 2) functioning dually as an initial refrain when a linking verse succeeds it, and 3) reiterating the central message of the leading-refrain song.

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<sup>59</sup> A special thanks to Dr. John Muniz for the emphasis on lyrical recontextualization in concluding refrains.

<sup>60</sup> Drew Nobile, *Form as Harmony*, 71.

### *Roles of the Linking Verses*

Linking verses serve to connect (or “link”) the initial refrain and concluding refrain of leading-refrain songs. Though linking verses vary in their harmonic processes, linking verses all share the role of supporting or expanding the refrain’s central message. For instance, the refrain of Chris de Silva’s “Holy Spirit” (**Example 3.5**) asks the Holy Spirit to bestow the gifts of its presence. The linking verses expand on the subject, with lyrics asking for the specific gifts the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord). The concluding verse follows, thus reemphasizing the central message of the song.

#### **Example 3.5** – Chris de Silva, “Holy Spirit”

Initial Refrain	Holy Spirit, come, refresh us with your fire of love Holy Spirit, come, renew us, heal us with your love.
Linking Verse (Verse 1)	Give us the gift of wisdom, wisdom to follow the truth, giver of gifts, and light of the world, veni, Sancte Spiritus
Concluding Refrain	(as before)

In regard to harmony, four types of linking verses occur in CCM (**Table 3.1**).

**Table 3.1** – Linking Verse Types

Linking Verse Type	Description
Type 1: Open Continuous	Begins off tonic and ends with half cadence
Type 2: Closed Continuous	Begins off tonic and ends on tonic
Type 3: Open Sectional	Begins on tonic and ends with half cadence
Type 4: Closed Sectional	Begins on tonic and ends on tonic

Open and closed refer to the linking verse's endings: an open verse ends on a non-tonic harmony, usually a half cadence, whereas a closed verse ends on tonic. Sectional and continuous refer to the verses' beginning: continuous refers to an off tonic beginning whereas sectional refers to a tonic beginning.

*Type 1 (T<sub>1</sub>): Open Continuous Linking Verses*

An open continuous linking verse (OC) produces a direct harmonic connection between initial and concluding refrains by starting on an off-tonic function and concluding on a half-cadence. Since the initial and concluding refrains provide tonal stability, an OC harmonically counters the refrain's tonal stability by emphasizing off-tonic harmony at its immediate onset; it thus continues the impetus of the initial refrain, similar to the "bridges" of popular music and CCM songs.<sup>61</sup>

Consider Roc O'Connor's "Lift Up Your Hearts" (**Example 3.6**). After the refrain ends in D major, the OC linking verse begins on E minor (**S<sub>R</sub>**). In the analysis, E minor is understood as tonicized, or made temporarily tonic. The verse progression emphasizes E minor with its strong downbeat placement; further, the underlying progression following **S<sub>R</sub>** reinforces the

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<sup>61</sup> Drew Nobile, *Form as Harmony*, 106–112.

temporary orientation to E minor. Therefore, the **S<sub>R</sub>** under the brackets indicate a prolongation of E minor, but the symbols inside the bracket reflect the harmonic process within the expansion of E minor. The verse emphasizes E minor in three successive melodic units, shown by brackets. The first two units end on E minor's **S+** while the third unit ends on E minor's **T**. The final unit draws the listener back to the key of D major with a motion to the half cadence (via **S** of **S** → **S** → **D**). The first three units combine as a single expansion of **S<sub>R</sub>** while the final unit resumes the incomplete authentic cycle.

**Example 3.6** – Roc O'Connor, SJ, “Lift Up Your Hearts”

**Refrain (ending)**

G/D      D      G/D      A      D      G/D      D      G/D D

whose love is en - dur - ing.

**S**      (**T** as cadential motion)      **D**      **T**

**S<sub>R</sub>**

**Verse**

4      Em      G      D      A      Em      G      A

Shout with joy — to the Lord, all the earth!      Praise the name a - bove all names!

**T**      **T<sub>R</sub>**      **D<sub>R</sub>**      **S+**      **T**      **T<sub>R</sub>**      **S+**

**S<sub>R</sub>**      **S<sub>R</sub>**

8      C      G      D      Em      C      G      A

Say to God, "How wondrous your works, how glorious your name!"

**S** of **T<sub>R</sub>**      **D<sub>R</sub>**      **T**      **S** of **S**      **D**

**S<sub>R</sub>**

Incomplete authentic cycle

Though “off tonic” may describe core functions that are **S** or **D**, “off tonic” also includes chords that are not literally the tonic chord. For example, **IV** and **V** are clearly off-tonic chords

with the respective function **S** and **D**, but, to a degree, so are chords that are traditionally understood as tonic-adjacent chords such as **III** in a minor key or **vi** in major (both **T<sub>R</sub>** in their respective contexts). For linking verses, it is best to recognize the degree of non-tonic quality of tonic-adjacent chords. For instance, **vi** is more subdominant-like than **I**, but not completely subdominant either; nonetheless, **vi** stands apart from **I**. Starting a linking verse on **vi** marks, at least, a shift of harmonic emphasis to a chord other than **I**. Considering further that the preceding section (the initial refrain) establishes tonic firmly, a listener experiences an effect of harmonic departure coinciding with the start of this new section (the linking verse) when an off-tonic harmony starts its harmonic process.

For example, John Foley's "One Bread, One Body" (**Example 3.7**) contains an OC linking verse that emphasizes **vi** at its start. With the refrain's final cadence in G major (**T**), the linking verse departs harmonically by starting on E minor (**vi**). This move to the relative minor contrasts with the refrain while maintaining harmonic stability, since the linking verse's key of **vi** is **T<sub>R</sub>** in relation to the original **T**.

**Example 3.7** – John Foley, SJ, “One Bread, One Body”

**Refrain (ending)**

Em D/F# G Em A D D7 G C/G G C/G G D/F#

we are one bod - y in this one Lord. \_\_\_\_\_ (transition)

T<sub>R</sub> D T T<sub>R</sub> D of D T

T prolongation into complete authentic cycle

**Verse**

Em D Em D

Gen - tile or Jew, ser - vant of free,

T D<sub>R</sub> T D<sub>R</sub>

T<sub>R</sub> T<sub>R</sub>

Em F Am D

wom - an or man, no more.

T S<sub>L</sub> S<sub>R</sub> D

incomplete authentic cycle

*Type 2 (T<sub>2</sub>): Closed Continuous Linking Verses*

A closed continuous linking verse (CC), like an OC, draws away from the harmonic stability of the initial refrain, but unlike an OC, it ends with an authentic cadence. For instance, Trevor Thomson’s “Christ in Me Arise” (**Example 3.8**) establishes D minor/Dorian (i) as the key/mode of the initial refrain. However, the linking verse begins in F major (III) and progresses to a cadence in D minor. Though the linking verse provides an authentic cadence, the expectation of the refrain’s return seems to weaken any finality the authentic cadence provides to the song overall; to this end, the authentic cadence ends the linking verse, while the refrain ends the song.

**Example 3.8** – Trevor Thomson, “Christ in Me Arise”

**Refrain (ending)**

Christ in me a - rise and I shall rise with you.

$S_R$  (D)  $S_R$   $D_R$  T

**Verse (period structure)**

Be thou my vi - sion; o - pen these eyes, show - ing me all that I must see.

T D  $S_R$  S

$T_R$  plagal half cadence

On - ward to the king - dom, you are the way. A - rise in me and I shall rise with you.

T D  $S_R$   $D_R$  T

$T_R$  complete authentic cycle (via Aeolian cadence)

*Type 3 ( $T_3$ ): Open Sectional Linking Verses*

An open sectional linking verse (OS), unlike OCs and CCs, begins on the tonic chord (**I** or **i**). Despite strong tonic articulation at its start, the OS still produces a bridging effect between the initial refrain and the concluding refrain. Additionally, the OS, like the OC, ends with a half cadence that prepares the refrain’s return. Altogether, the harmonic process of the OS linking verse is best described as an incomplete plagal or authentic cycle.

Michael Joncas’ “I Have Loved You” (**Example 3.9**) contains an OS linking verse. The refrain’s **T**-function ending connects with the OS linking verse’s **T**-functioning start. Further, the OS linking verse contains two units: 1) a form of the plagal cycle understood as **T** prolongation, and 2) the final approach to the half cadence (incomplete authentic cycle). Just like the preceding

two verse types (OC and CC), the OS linking verse bridges the initial and concluding refrains despite the strong **T** articulation at its start. Other song examples including this verse type are Darryl Ducote's "Look Beyond" and Marty Haugen's "We Remember."

**Example 3.9** – Michael Joncas, "I Have Loved You"

**Refrain (ending)**

Bm Gmaj7 Asus4 A D

(love.) I have called you \_\_\_\_\_ and you are mine

S D T

Complete authentic cycle

**Verse**

D A C Em/D D Dmaj7

Seek the face of the Lord and long for him: \_\_\_\_\_ he will

T D S of T/S T

T prolongation (via plagal cycle)

**Refrain (start)**

D7 G Asus4 A7 D Em/D

bring you his light and his peace. \_\_\_\_\_ (I have loved you \_\_\_\_\_ with an

D of S D || T

Incomplete authentic cycle

*Type 4 (T4): Closed Sectional Linking Verses*

A closed sectional linking verse (CS) begins on tonic and ends on the tonic chord, containing a full plagal or authentic cycle within each formal section. In this sense, both the CS and coordinating initial/concluding refrains provide tonal stability. However, the strong articulation of the initial refrain at the start of the song positions the verses in a more subsidiary position formally; the benefit of lyric structure discussed above also reinforces the bridging quality of the CS linking verse.

Willard F. Jabusch's "Whatsoever You Do" (**Example 3.10**) exemplifies the CS linking verse. The verse breaks into three sections (by system) relying on **T**-prolonging authentic cycles to support the verse. As stated with the criteria for the CS linking verse, "Whatsoever You Do" ends its verse with the completion of an overarching cycle and moves to the concluding refrain. The bridging effect of the verse comes from its lyrical content, which refers to the Corporal Works of Mercy (feeding the hungry, providing shelter, and so on). Harmonically speaking, the two sections appear cyclically balanced in the sense that both formal sections contain one overarching complete authentic cycle: however, the concluding refrain's authentic cycle delivers conclusion to the leading-refrain cycle whereas the initial refrain and CS only conclude their respective formal sections. Finally, the provided sample of "Whatsoever You Do" shows one example of a completed leading-refrain unit (with the following four verses omitted).

Example 3.10 – Willard F. Jabusch, “” Whatsoever You Do”

Refrain

What - so - ev - er you do to the least of my  
T (S T D)

peo - ple, that you do un - to me.  
TR S D T  
Complete authentic cycle

Verse

When I was hun - gry, you gave me to eat;  
T (S D T) etc.  
T prolongation

When I was thirst - y, you gave me to drink.  
T S D T  
T prolongation

Now en - ter in - to the home of my Fa - ther.  
T S D T  
Complete authentic cycle D.C.

*Case Study: Leading-refrain Form in Popular Music*

Leading-refrain form is rare in popular music; where a song does start on the chorus, popular music scholars give alternative explanations. For instance, some rock and rock-adjacent songs start with an “overture” chorus (a term coined by Drew Nobile), which acts as a type of instructional intro to a verse-chorus song.<sup>62</sup> Overture choruses are typically marked by a thin texture, as in Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not Gonna Take It”: a drum intro (0:00) leads to a vocals-only chorus, with guitar and bass entering only afterward (0:16).

However, Nobile further extends the “overture” chorus technique to folk “rock” songs such as Dolly Parton’s “Jolene,” Bob Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man,” and Peter, Paul, and Mary’s “Puff the Magic Dragon.”<sup>63</sup> Though the concept of “overture” choruses remains quite convincing for some popular music, the aforementioned folk “rock” songs conform more to the leading-refrain form found in CCM (which run parallel to CCM’s development), thus making the case for a popular leading-chorus form. Though Nobile states that these songs start with the “overture” chorus, these choruses also contextualize the lyrics of the ensuing verses, similar to that of CCM leading-refrain songs. For instance, Dolly Parton identifies a person and the overall situation (stealing the singer’s man) in the opening chorus, which allows for the verse to describe this other woman; if the refrain were removed, the verse would lack context. Similarly, Bob Dylan identifies the character to whom the singer speaks in the chorus which assists in contextualizing lyrics of the ensuing verses. In Peter, Paul, and Mary’s “Puff the Magic Dragon,” the opening lyrics seem like a chorus, but only in retrospect; the opening lyrics prime the story as the antecedent of the first verse; the second half, the consequent, contains non-chorus lyrics and

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<sup>62</sup> Nobile, *Form as Harmony*, 76.

<sup>63</sup> These songs are implicitly considered folk rock by Nobile. However, the use of acoustic instrumentation over electric instruments, as well as heavy folk and country styles, puts the term “rock” in doubt.

informs the listener that the full section (the first verse) is narrative in nature and thus conforms to the label verse.

The distinction between an “overture” chorus and leading chorus helps in understanding how contextualizing lyrics affect our perception of the song’s form. Of note, each of the cited songs’ respective verses (with the exception of “Puff the Magic Dragon”) draw their general harmonic structure from the initial chorus. These folk-rock chorus are best viewed as essential to the overall form; hence, any instructional quality these choruses have are likely more collateral, since the folk-rock leading choruses serve a lyrical and musical purpose that affects the listener’s perception of the song’s entire form.

Admittedly, sometimes songs from folk and folk-adjacent genres (such as country or old-time music) start with the refrain (or chorus) where the chorus is seemingly optional. For instance, the well-known African-American spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” typically begins on the refrain (though some artists, such as Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, and The Brothers Four, start at the verse). Though the refrain’s positioning at the beginning of the song provides considerable context for what is “comin’ for to carry me home,” the verse begins from the first person perspective. Another example of this ambivalence of formal starting points would be Hank William’s “I Saw the Light” against Bill Monroe’s cover as well as Ferlin Husky’s “Wings of a Dove” against Dolly Parton’s cover; these examples show that the opening refrain can be omitted, but only in instances where the verse lends itself as a logical lyrical starting point (usually first-person perspective). This chorus omission occurs in CCM as well. For instance, Jonas Myrin’s and Matt Redman’s “10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)” typically begins on the chorus as most sheet music would direct, but many covers of the song omit the leading chorus, yielding a verse-chorus song form.

*Conclusion*

The Vatican II reforms opened the door to a new era in Roman Catholic sacred music. With their emphasis on active participation, vernacular language, and widening permissions on musical expression (e.g., permitted instruments, permitted musical traditions, etc.), composers were able to import concurrent harmonic and instrumental traditional/secular styles to support the Roman Catholic liturgy. In doing so, Vatican II also solidified the highly prevalent CCM song form (leading-refrain form) that became a musical device to inspire greater active participation in the liturgy while communicating church teachings with contemporary music. Overall, CCM marks the most significant musical style shift in the modern church.

## APPENDIX: TERMINOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CCM AND POPULAR MUSIC

### *Refrain versus Chorus*

CCM and popular music share most form-related terminology in designating a song's formal section. However, where popular music uses the term *chorus*, CCM uses *refrain*. Both terms are synonymous in denotation: they describe a formal section marked by lyrical invariance, consequential placement after a verse or bridge, and memorability.

The terminological divergence results from popular music scholarship's continuous development and the consistent use of "refrain" by CCM publishers.<sup>64</sup> According to Rick Modlin, the manager of music development at Oregon Catholic Press (OCP), the use of "refrain" was already in consistent use from the time he joined OCP in 1990. He also offered a statement he obtained from Randall DeBruyn, a former missal and music editor for OCP. DeBruyn stated:

"When I joined OCP in early 1981, the label "Refrain" was already in regular use for most new music that we published. I did see "Chorus" from time to time, but I can't remember if we ever consciously changed that to "Refrain" or not.

If there was a conscious decision to use the "Refrain" label, I suspect that we did so to avoid any confusion for music being published for congregational use, which was most of what we were publishing. Using "Chorus" might have been misinterpreted to mean that a choir, or some other separate group, was expected to sing that portion of the music, not the congregation. Other Catholic publishers were following the same conventions, by and large, at that time. Using "Refrain" would not have been so much a style decision, but rather an intent to assure that that portion of the music was to be sung by all."<sup>65</sup>

To this end, the use of the term "refrain" serves a practical purpose to indicate all-inclusive singing. In this way, its use expresses a commitment to the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s "active participation," to which "chorus" would potential detract through confusion.

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<sup>64</sup> In popular music scholarship, the terms refrain and chorus appear as synonyms or as distinct entities.

<sup>65</sup> Email correspondence with Modlin, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

However, the nonuse of the term “chorus” distances CCM from popular music. Modlin added:

Nowadays, if music does arrive with the label "Chorus," our editors typically do change it to "Refrain," simply for style consistency. Interestingly, the term "Pre-Chorus" (though not used often) does *not* get changed to "Pre-Refrain," even though it usually precedes the "Refrain." No one ever said music was an *exact* science!

One other tidbit offered by another editor I asked: hymns are often listed as "with refrain" but not "with chorus." Modern church music publishers like OCP may have adopted the term from that practice, rather than the "Chorus" label, which seems more closely aligned with secular song.<sup>66</sup>

The use of *refrain* in CCM simply arises from the practicality and stylistic consistency of publishing companies; therefore, the CCM refrain acts the same as a popular music chorus (only under a different name). In the study, the term *refrain* bears the same definition to that of a popular music chorus.

Adjacently, popular music refrains (“a short passage that serves as the melodic and lyrical ‘hook’” within a formal section), occur in CCM too, resulting in more terminological conflicts. Since popular music refrains occur as short portions within or at section starts/endings, an adjective such as “head refrain” or “tail refrain” 1) implies the use of this type of section-embedded refrain and 2) indicates its placement within the section in question. So far, a refrain acts as a popular music chorus while a head/tail refrain acts as an embedded lyrical-musical hook.

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<sup>66</sup> Email correspondence with Modlin, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Ironically, popular music scholarship contains ambiguities in identifying refrains and choruses, as extensively discussed by Trevor de Clercq and noted by Drew Nobile.<sup>67</sup> Despite the issues, Drew Nobile provides guidelines on distinguishing refrains from choruses:

1. Refrains are shorter than choruses: choruses usually span at least eight measures, while refrains usually span at most eight measures.
2. Refrains usually contain either one or two melodic groups, while choruses more often contain four or more.
3. Tail refrains most often take up less than half of the verse's total length, e.g., comprising the last four bars of a 16- or 12-measure verse. Choruses are most often as long as or longer than the verse.
4. Shorter passages may still function as choruses if they follow a clear verse and prechorus.<sup>68</sup>

These guidelines will remain effective in distinguishing the CCM refrain from the embedded refrains in CCM.

#### *Other Terminological Differences between CCM and Popular Music*

Occasionally, instances arise where the term verse refers to a section that acts bridge (at least partially). Rick Modlin offered the following statement:

The reason for a musical section which clearly functions as a bridge being instead labeled as a verse is completely a practical one: It simply gives a clearer idea to the performer *when* the bridge is intended to be sung. The needs of publishers to save both paper (for their own costs) and page turns (for the convenience of their customers) leads to the stacking of verses, nested ending brackets, and other notational shortcuts which in turn can sometimes confuse the performer and make it unclear where the bridge is intended to fall. By labeling it with a verse number instead, at least some of that unclarity is removed. Similarly, in a performance situation (a liturgy, e.g.), wherein the needs of the moment may dictate not sequentially following the musical roadmap, it is more convenient for a music director to hold up, say, three fingers to quietly indicate "go to verse 3" than it is to indicate "go to the bridge," for which there doesn't seem to be hand signal in common usage.

As such, renaming a bridge with a verse numeral is almost always a choice made by an editor — and not all editors agree with the philosophy, which accounts for its inconsistent application.<sup>69</sup>

Though Modlin elucidates the practicality of publishing a bridge section as a third, fourth, or so verse, the publishing irregularities indicate that this study should maintain the term bridge for all

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<sup>67</sup> Trevor de Clercq, "Sections and Successions in Successful Songs: A Prototype Approach to Form in Rock Music" (PhD diss., Rochester, NY, 2012), 57-58.; Nobile, *Form as Harmony*, 73n6.

<sup>68</sup> Nobile, *Form as Harmony*, 61.

<sup>69</sup> Email correspondence with Modlin, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

sections that *act* like a bridge: a section which contrasts sections within the song, emphasizes functions that are *not* core **T**, and typically culminates with a core **D** function (altogether known as a “classic bridge”).

Though another bridge-type occurs in popular music (“groove bridge”), it remains mostly absent from CCM since it prolongs **T** function and “provides an opportunity for singers to engage directly with listeners.”<sup>70</sup> Further, the “groove bridge” may occur in improvisation at Mass, but few CCM examples contain one. Notwithstanding, the “classic bridge” defines the majority of CCM bridges.

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<sup>70</sup> Nobile, *Form as Harmony*, 115.

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