

NON- FUNCTIONAL HARMONY

Definition:

Chords in which the diatonic association is undermined; chords whose functional resolution is avoided.

Non-functional chords can be analyzed using traditional methods but do not "function" in the traditional way; they do not resolve where they should and a Roman numeral analysis of these chords will make little (if any) sense.

Use:

Chords which have no traditional function have some over-riding force that unites their movement, including:

- sequences.
- passing motion.
- neighbor motion.
- common tone consideration (enharmonic notes / chords).
- parallel motion (e.g., series of first inversion chords).
- chromatic motion in bass or melody line.
- outline of a traditional chord used in a traditional way.
- symmetrical relationships.

Other names:

Non-functional harmonies are also called:

Simultaneities.

verticalities.

How to analyze:

1. Analyze the chords for root, quality and position. Mark these aspects under the chord using lead-sheet symbols (e.g., E^{b6} = Eb major first inversion chord, B^{b7} = dominant seventh chord (Mm seventh) on B^b).
2. Mark any chords that function in the key with Roman and Arabic numerals.
3. Look for the over-riding force used with non-functional chords. (e.g. sequence, passing motion). Note the use of this force in the music.